DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 360 120 RC 019 223

TITLE	Notes From the Field: Education Reform in Rural Kentucky, 1991-1992.
INSTITUTION	Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, W. Va.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	92
CONTRACT	RP91002002
NOTE	55p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Notes From the Field: Education Reform in Rural Kentucky; v1-2 May 1991-Sep 1992
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Change; Educational Equity (Finance); *Educational Finance; Elementary Secondary Education; *Expenditure per Student; Health Services; Parent Education; Personnel Selection; Preschool Education; Professional Development; Rural Education; *School Based Management; School Districts; *Social Services; Student Evaluation; *Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	Kentucky; *Kentucky Education Reform Act 1990

ABSTRACT

This document consists of the first five issues of "Notes from the Field," a serial documenting a 5-year study of the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 in four rural Kentucky school districts. The first issue provides a brief overview of KERA policies and the status of their implementation in the study districts. It covers: (1) school-based decision making; (2) preschool education; (3) family resource centers and youth services centers; (4) extended school services; (5) political measures; (6) superintendent selection process; (7) termination of teacher contracts; and (8) finance. The second issue focuses on school-based decision making and reports that all study districts are implementing this component on schedule. Differences exist among the districts, however, in their aggressiveness of implementation and their interpretation of the law. A survey of staff in two districts shows general support for school-based decision making. The third issue reports on the establishment of family resource centers (elementary schools) and youth services centers (secondary schools), based on visits to four centers. All centers visited were fully operational and appeared to be successfully coordinating community services. The three family resource centers were focusing on health services and parent and child education, while the youth service center was providing all six services listed in KERA. The fourth issue features KERA finance measures and analyzes how these measures have affected the study districts. The analysis reveals that education funding increased substantially in the four rural districts since the passage of KERA. Most of the new funding went to salary increases, instructional and library supplies, and programs to help at-risk students. Although it is not possible to study the equalization effects of KERA with such a small sample, per pupil revenue appeared to become more equal among three of the four districts. The fifth issue summarizes teacher focus-group discussions in each of the four school districts. The teachers were largely supportive of the basic philosophy and programs of KERA and hopeful that the legislature would stick with the law long enough for it to work. They were frustrated, anxious, and fatigued, however, from trying to make massive changes in a relatively short period of time. While some of their anxiety may be seen as a natural part of the change process, it is clear that teachers need more time, assistance, and resources if they are to keep up the present level of implementation. (KS)

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NOTES FROM THE FIELD:

EDUCATION REFORM IN RURAL KENTUCKY

Volume 1-2

May 1991 — September 1992

(5 Issues)

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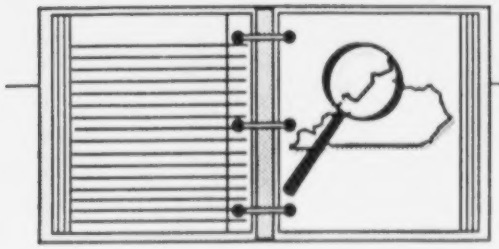

NOTES FROM THE FIELD:

Education Reform in Rural Kentucky

Volume 1, No. 1
May 1991

This is the first issue of "Notes From the Field," a publication designed to keep you abreast of the findings of a research project the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) is currently conducting in rural Kentucky. AEL's State Policy program will be documenting the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 in four rural Kentucky school districts over the next five years. These districts were selected to represent a range of conditions that exist within Kentucky, and have been assigned pseudonyms that reflect the geographical location of the districts while protecting their anonymity. The pseudonyms for the districts currently identified are West County, East County, and Independent District. Another school district will be participating in the study for the next few months; this district will be identified as Southeast County. A district in Central Kentucky will be added to the study by fall 1991.

Two AEL researchers, Pamelia Coe and Patricia Kannapel, will be visiting these districts for a few days each month to find out what sort of problems and successes district staff, board members, parents, students, and community members are realizing from KERA. These findings will be reported in this research synthesis, which we will issue regularly. If you would like to remain on the mailing list to stay informed of our findings, please complete and mail the form on the back page.

If you would like to comment on any of our reports or share your own experiences with KERA implementation, mail your correspondence to Pam Coe, Appalachia Educational Laboratory, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325 or call Pam at 800/624-9120, or Patty at 502/581-0324.

In This Issue

This first issue provides a brief overview of the status of KERA implementation to date in the study districts. Future issues will focus on specific KERA topics.

RC 019223

This synthesis of findings is part of a qualitative study of education reform in rural Kentucky being conducted by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) to provide feedback to educators and policymakers on the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990. Two researchers are documenting reform efforts in four rural Kentucky districts that have been assigned the pseudonyms of: West County, Southeast County, East County, and Independent District. For more information about this project contact either researcher, Pam Coe (800/624-9120) or Patty Kannapel (502/581-0324), State Policy program, AEL, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325.

School-based Decisionmaking

An Overview of the Law:

KERA requires each school board to adopt a policy for implementing school-based decisionmaking (SBDM) by January 1, 1991, and mandates that at least one school in all districts begin implementing SBDM by June 30, 1991. Any school may implement SBDM if two-thirds of the faculty votes to do so, but if no school in the district has voted to implement SBDM by the June 30 deadline, the school board must appoint a school.

To implement SBDM, KERA specifies that a school council be appointed at each school. The school council shall consist of the principal--who will act as chair--three teachers, and two parents. The law permits schools to apply to the state board for an alternative council structure, but the state board is encouraging schools to follow the mandated council composition. KERA does not mandate training for the school council, but many professional organizations around the state have been encouraging and offering training. Local board policy in at least two of the four districts in the study requires that council members receive training. KERA does not provide compensation to school council members, nor does it grant release time to teachers and principals to attend and prepare for meetings.

Implementation:

There has been more SBDM activity in Southeast County than in any of the other study districts. One school voted nearly unanimously to implement SBDM, and its council began meeting in January 1991. Since that time, the council has participated in a three-day training workshop, has met monthly, and has decided (for the 1990-91 school year) to set policy in two of the eight areas permitted by KERA: determination of curriculum and instructional practices. In addition, the council has filled one personnel vacancy at the school--that of secretary. A second Southeast County school recently voted overwhelmingly in favor of SBDM, but will not begin implementing until the fall of 1991. A third school in the district has voted on SBDM twice, but the concept has failed to win the support of a two-thirds majority (although a simple majority did vote in favor of SBDM on both occasions).

West County and East County both have only one school that has voted to implement SBDM (in both counties a second school has voted it down). School councils in these districts are spending this spring getting organized and obtaining training. One council is planning to conduct a needs assessment at the school to determine what areas the faculty would like the council to address. Results of this survey will be analyzed this spring, but it appears that the council will not engage in major decisionmaking or policy setting until the 1991-92 school year. In Independent District, the elementary school is voting on SBDM the latter part of May.

Preschool Program

An Overview of the Law:

KERA requires all school districts to provide a half-day preschool program for all at-risk four-year olds in the district beginning with the 1990-91 school year. Districts lacking adequate facilities may wait until the 1991-92 school year. At-risk is determined by eligiblity for free lunch under federal guidelines. In addition, the reform law requires all districts to provide, by 1991-92, preschool education to all three- to five-year-old children identified as handicapped. The law allows for all other four-year olds to be served as space is available.

Implementation:

Three of the districts in the study implemented the at-risk preschool during the 1990-91 school year. In West County and Independent District, the districts contracted the at-risk programs out to Head Start and are serving nearly all the eligible four-year olds. West County also plans to contract its handicapped preschool program out to Head Start beginning with the 1991-92 school year. East County has deferred implementing the at-risk program until 1991-92, for lack of adequate space.

Southeast County decided to provide preschool to all four-year olds in the district, beginning in the fall of 1990. District administrators reported that adequate preschool services were not available elsewhere in the county and many parents were requesting services. In addition, the district has a high percentage of students who qualify for the at-risk program. The preschool coordinator for the county reports that Head Start and the KERA preschool combined do not reach all the at-risk four-year olds in the district, although they serve all who request the service. The Southeast County District also began serving handicapped preschoolers during the 1990-91 school year and integrates this program with the KERA preschool. A special education teacher acts as consultant to the preschool teacher and also provides home-based services to handicapped preschoolers whose parents prefer that they not attend the preschool. In total, Southeast County is serving over 60 at-risk preschoolers and over 30 handicapped preschoolers.

Family Resource Centers/Youth Services Centers

Overview of the Law:

KERA requires that social service centers be established in or near every school in which 20 percent or more of the student body qualifies for free lunch. At the elementary level, these centers are called family resource centers. Their purpose is to identify and coordinate existing services, including referrals to social service and health agencies; and to provide parent and family education, preschool and after school child care, and training for child day care providers. The middle and high school centers are called youth service centers. Their purpose is to identify and coordinate existing services, including referrals to health and social service agencies, employment counseling, summer and part-time job development, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, and family crisis and mental health counseling.

Districts are to submit initial plans for these centers by June 30, 1991, and centers must be established in or near at least one-fourth of all eligible schools in each district by June 30, 1992. Because funding is more limited than anticipated, school districts must submit proposals for the 1991-92 year on a competitive basis.

Implementation:

Southeast County, with its high proportion of economically deprived students, is moving full speed ahead with its plans to establish social service centers. Proposals will be submitted to have two centers in operation by the fall of 1991. One will be a youth services center located near the high school, and the other will be a family resource center located near the elementary school that has the highest percentage of economically deprived students. The district has received a great deal of assistance from a local self-help parent organization in planning for the centers. This organization will also provide both financial and staff assistance to the operation of the centers.

East County, which has almost as high a proportion of economically deprived students as Southeast County, has also moved ahead at high speed and has submitted a proposal requesting a center at each of its schools.

West County, which has a much smaller proportion of economically deprived students and is lacking in adequate facilities, is moving more slowly. The district has begun formulating plans for a combination preschool and family resource center to be constructed near one of the elementary schools and to be in operation by the 1992-93 school year. The center is to be a joint project with the area Head Start. Since less than 20 percent of West County high school students qualify for free lunch, no youth service center is planned in the district.

Extended School Services

Overview of the Law:

KERA requires all districts to provide, beginning with the 1990-91 school year, extended instructional time to students who need additional time to meet the educational outcomes defined by the law. This extended time may be offered before or after school, on weekends, during the summer, or at any other time beyond the normal school day; the district must provide transportation. Participation in the program is voluntary, and the program is not to be used as a punitive measure. District teachers staff the program and are paid for their time.

Implementation:

All four districts had begun offering an extended school program by the fall of 1990, and respondents in all locations reported enthusiasm for the program. Although there is no mandated structure or guidelines for the extended program, respondents in all districts describe the program as tutorial in nature. In East County, tutoring is offered both before and after school, with some schools offering both. Some schools offer tutoring daily, some less often. A summer school program is

planned for two schools. In Southeast County, extended school services are being offered after school at all schools five days a week for a maximum of two hours. The district either provides transportation to the program or reimburses students and parents for mileage. In addition, the district is planning a summer program, but has not yet worked out the specifics.

West County is offering extended services for one hour after school two days a week at all schools and is providing transportation. Some high school students are also meeting with teachers before school, but they must make these arrangements on their own and provide their own transportation. A summer school program is planned for the high school; it will serve both high school and seventh- and eighth-grade students.

Independent District provides after-school tutoring every day and is planning to offer a summer program.

Governance

Political Measures

Overview of the Law:

Many Kentucky school districts have gained notoriety for the political exploits of the district leadership. This typically is reported to occur in districts where a high percentage of the population is unemployed. In such areas, jobs of any kind are highly valued, and school boards are reported to have frequently engaged in nepotism, cronyism, and patronage in attempts to win the favor of their constituency and, thus, be reelected. In an attempt to eliminate these practices, KERA prohibits relatives of school board members and superintendents from working in the same school (except in certain limited circumstances, in each case) and prohibits board members from attempting to influence the hiring of school employees, except the superintendent and board attorney. In addition, nearly all hiring and firing authority is transferred from the local board to the superintendent. As school-based decisionmaking is implemented, some of this authority will be delegated to the local school.

Implementation:

Respondents reported a tradition of political abuses in only one of the four districts studied, although a few respondents reported some political hiring on a smaller scale in a second district. In Southeast County, which has been most troubled by political abuse, there is virtually no industry, and the school district is the largest employer. Respondents in this district report that the political problem has been one of cronyism, not nepotism, and that this practice has gone on for many years. No board members in this district lost their seats as the result of KERA's nepotism measures, and many respondents reported in the fall of 1990 that the board continued to attempt to influence the hiring and firing of personnel.

By the spring of 1991, this practice was reported to have abated to some extent, but some respondents said that political hiring had merely

moved to a different arena. Both the superintendent and the chair of the school council confirmed that they had received numerous calls from citizens in need of employment. The school council chairperson reported explaining to these citizens that jobs would be awarded to the most qualified applicants. The council chair and the superintendent, in separate interviews, expressed the view that it will take awhile for the local citizenry to realize that the awarding of jobs will no longer be based on political connections. Observations at a regular meeting of the school council yielded no evidence of political activity, and the council focused on student related issues throughout the meeting.

The nepotism measures had affected no one in West County, and few people in the district are focusing on this aspect of KERA as significant to the district. The board adopted a policy several years ago that relatives cannot work in the same school, and the board chairman reported that he had never wanted to get involved in helping people obtain jobs. The superintendent confirmed that he has seldom come under pressure from the school board regarding personnel actions and that, prior to KERA implementation, the board usually accepted his personnel recommendations.

In both East County and Independent District, at least one school board member was not able to run for the board again because he/she had relatives on the district staff. (Elections have been held in both districts, and these members have been replaced.) Respondents in Independent District report that political abuses have not occurred there. People in both districts regretted the loss of the particular members who left the school board and felt they had not been responsible for any abuses.

Superintendent Selection Process

Overview of the Law:

Prior to KERA, vacancies in district superintendencies were filled by the local school board. The new law requires that a screening committee be formed within 30 days of when the board determines that a vacancy is expected. The membership of the committee is defined as two teachers elected by teachers in the district, one school board member appointed by the chair, one principal elected by principals in the district, and one parent elected by PTA/PTO presidents in the district. The screening committee is required to screen applicants for superintendent and make recommendations to the local board. The board must consider the recommendations, but is not required to make an appointment from them.

Implementation:

One of the four study districts is currently searching for a new superintendent, due to the retirement of the current superintendent. At the time of this writing, a screening committee has been elected, has interviewed several applicants for the position, and has recommended five candidates to the board. The board member who served on the committee reported satisfaction with the committee's work and with the new process for filling superintendent vacancies. The school board plans to interview the five finalists and make an appointment within the next month. The board chairman expressed confidence that the board would select a superintendent from the recommended list.

Termination of Teacher Contracts

Overview of the Law:

Prior to the passage of KERA, the termination of teacher contracts was recommended to the local board, and teachers could request a hearing before the board to answer the charges against them. The board then made a decision about the termination of the contract; its decision could be appealed to the circuit court. Under KERA, the superintendent notifies the local board of the dismissal. If the dismissal is appealed, hearings are held before a three-member tribunal appointed by the Chief State School Officer, consisting of one teacher, one administrator, and one lay person, all from outside the district. Following the hearing, the tribunal renders its decision by majority vote, and (as before) appeals may be made to the circuit court.

Implementation:

One of the four districts has just completed the above-described process for terminating a teacher's contract. The tribunal has voted to follow the superintendent's recommendation for termination, and the teacher plans to appeal to the circuit court. The superintendent reported satisfaction with the new procedure, but no more so than with the old procedure. No one else involved in the process has been interviewed.

Finance

Overview of the Law:

KERA is designed to equalize funding to school districts by providing all districts with an equal level of state assistance, requiring all districts to provide a minimum level of local support, and limiting the amount of additional revenue that local districts can generate. Specifically, local districts are required to levy a minimum equivalent tax rate of 30 cents per $100 of valuation or 35 cents if they wish to participate in the state school construction fund. Districts may levy a higher rate and provide up to 15 percent beyond the revenues guaranteed by the state. The state will match these funds up to a specified level (this matching money is known as Tier I funding). Any additional revenue generated at the local level must be approved by a vote of the people, will not be matched by the state, and cannot exceed a set level (this level of funding is known as Tier II).

For the 1990-91 school year, all districts were guaranteed an 8 to 25 percent increase in state funding. For 1991-92, this increase is guaranteed at between 5 and 25 percent.

Implementation:

For the 1990-91 school year, two of the four study districts received the full 25 percent increase in state funding. Both of these districts are county districts located in eastern Kentucky. East County raised its local rate by 23 cents, the highest local increase of any district studied. The district, thus, received additional monies beyond those guaranteed by the state through the Tier I funding program.

Southeast County raised its rate just to the minimum level required, which represented an increase of about 10 cents over the previous rate. This district is, however, considering levying a utility tax for the 1991-92 school year, which would move the district into the Tier I funding level.

The West County school board, which serves a largely agricultural area, encountered some opposition from local farmers in raising the local rate, but did manage to move the district a few cents into the Tier I funding level. Because of the relatively high property values in the area, however, the district received just over the minimum 8 percent increase in state funding. Respondents in this district reported little awareness of increased funding in the fall of 1990. By the spring of 1991, programs such as the preschool and extended services program provided concrete evidence of increased funding to education, but West County respondents continued to report that their funding level is inadequate.

The Independent District board did not raise the tax rate at all, but still had the highest local tax rate of any district studied. The district received about a 16 percent increase in state funding, and respondents in this district were largely unhappy with the new funding formula; they perceived it as not benefiting the district greatly. Taxpayers here have taxed themselves heavily for years in support of the schools and respondents claimed that the district, as a result, did not receive as large an increase in state funding as did neighboring districts that have historically had a lower tax rate.

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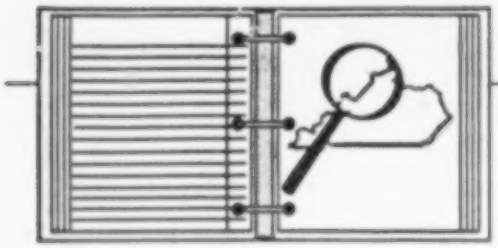

NOTES FROM THE FIELD:
Education Reform in Rural Kentucky

Vol. 1, Number 2
September 1991

SPECIAL FEATURE: SCHOOL-BASED DECISIONMAKING

> We've delved into site-based management head first here, and it has been a real good experience for us, overall.... I think the biggest benefit is that the staff begins to see that the problems within a school--they have ownership of those problems.... If they come up with a solution, they're more involved in it.... I think another big plus is the community involvement.... I think, in us getting [SBDM] organized, we've made more of an effort to get the community involved.
>
> --A high school principal

UPDATE ON AEL'S STUDY OF KERA

This is the second issue of "Notes from the Field," provided to keep you abreast of the findings of a research project the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) is conducting in rural Kentucky. The study is designed to document the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 and will focus on four rural districts over the next five years as they implement the law.

The districts have all been assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. In the first issue, we provided an overview of the status of KERA implementation in four districts. Since that time, we have changed the districts' pseudonyms to ensure greater anonymity. The new pseudonyms are Lamont County, Newtown Independent, Orange County, and Vanderbilt County.

We initially included another district--Humphrey County--in the study. We have dropped this district from the study for logistical reasons and have replaced it with Vanderbilt County. However, AEL will contact Humphrey County periodically over the next five years to monitor the progress of reform implementation there. Because the transition from Humphrey County to Vanderbilt County was occurring at the time of this writing, information on both districts is provided in this issue.

RC019223

This synthesis of findings is part of a qualitative study of education reform in rural Kentucky being conducted by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) to provide feedback to educators and policymakers on the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990. Two researchers are documenting reform efforts in four rural Kentucky districts that have been assigned the pseudonyms of: Lamont County, Newtown Independent, Orange County, and Vanderbilt County. For more information about this project contact either researcher, Pam Coe (800/624-9120) or Patty Kannapel (502/581-0324), State Policy program, AEL, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325.

OVERVIEW OF THE SBDM COMPONENT OF KERA

SBDM Policy

Each local school board is required to adopt, by January 1, 1991, a policy for implementing SBDM. The policy must address such items as school budget and administration, student assessment, school improvement plans, parent and community participation, requirements for waiver of district policies, record-keeping requirements, and a process for appealing council decisions.

Implementation Mandates and Timelines

At least one school in all districts (except those containing only one school) must begin implementing SBDM by June 30, 1991. Any school may implement SBDM if two-thirds of the faculty votes to do so, but if no school in the district votes to implement SBDM by the June 30 deadline, the school board must appoint a school. All schools in the Commonwealth must implement SBDM by July 1, 1996, unless they are the only school in the district or are achieving at or above the threshold level for student success defined by the state.

School Councils

The School Council at SBDM schools consists of three teachers elected by a majority of teachers at the school, two parents elected by the parent-teacher organization or by a parent organization formed for this purpose, and the principal--who will act as chair. Council membership can be increased proportionately without requesting an exemption from the state. Parents and teachers serve one-year terms but may be elected to consecutive terms.

The law permits schools to apply for an alternative council structure, but the state board has recently promulgated regulations specifying that schools adopting SBDM after the effective date of KERA (July 13, 1990) must maintain the 3-2-1 ratio and that classified staff and students may serve only as non-voting members of the council. In addition, schools that implemented SBDM prior to July 13, 1990, who request an alternate structure are required to submit evidence that the council acted as a true decisionmaking body and that the school's parents, students, certified staff, and administrators support continued use of the existing model. Priority for approval of such models will be given to those that include parents in numbers sufficient to meet the 3-2-1 configuration.

Council Responsibilities

The council's primary responsibility is to set school policy that provides an "environment to enhance student achievement and help the school meet the goals" established by sections 2 and 3 of KERA. It is also responsible for setting school policy in eight specific areas, participating in personnel actions, and making some funding decisions.

Eight policy areas. The law defines eight areas in which councils must adopt a policy:*

(1) Determination of curriculum (within the local board policy).
(2) Assignment of staff time.
(3) Assignment of students to classes and programs.
(4) Determination of the schedule of the school day and week (subject to beginning and ending times of the school day and school calendar year established by the local board).
(5) Determination of use of school space during the school day.
(6) Issues regarding instructional practices.
(7) Discipline and classroom management techniques.
(8) Extracurricular programs and policies related to student participation.

Personnel actions. When a staff vacancy occurs at an SBDM school, the superintendent submits a list of applicants to the principal, who must consult with the council before filling the vacancy. If the vacancy to be filled is that of principal, the council selects the new principal from a list of applicants submitted by the superintendent. In both cases, the principal or council may request additional applications from the superintendent.

In addition, the School Council is to determine the number of persons to be employed in each job classification (within the limits of available funds).*

Expenditure of funds. Local boards are required to appropriate at least $75 per pupil to all schools to be spent on instructional materials, supplies, and equipment. In SBDM schools, councils determine how to expend these funds.*

Other. In addition to the above responsibilities, local boards may grant school councils any other authority permitted by law.

STATUS OF SBDM IMPLEMENTATION IN THE STUDY DISTRICTS

The chart on page 5 provides a summary of SBDM implementation in the five study districts. Note that some information on Vanderbilt County has not yet been obtained due to the recent addition of this district to the study. The discussion below will provide additional detail on various aspects of SBDM implementation.

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*Many school councils are electing to assume only some of the responsibilities specified by KERA. State department staff and other trainers have encouraged them to "go slow," undertaking responsibilities only as they feel fully prepared. However, according to state department staff, the "go slow" approach is equivalent to delegating part of the council's authority to the principal, superintendent, or school board. A state department official in the SBDM department advises councils who choose to "go slow" to do so through formal action during a council meeting, so that the decision will be documented in the minutes.

SBDM Policy

Most Kentucky school districts, in developing their local SBDM policies, consulted sample policies prepared by such organizations as the state department, the Kentucky Education Association (KEA), and the Kentucky School Boards' Association (KSBA). Most districts in this study based their policies primarily on the KSBA model, but made some modifications to suit local needs. Two districts--Orange and Vanderbilt--approached this task somewhat differently than the others.

In Orange County, the superintendent developed administrative regulations, which were subsequently adopted as school board policy. Although this policy resembled the KSBA model, it contained a few features that local teachers opposed: inclusion of a classified staff person on the School Council; a policy to avoid nepotism on the council; and a provision that council decisions could be appealed to the school board, whose decision would be final. OCEA (the local KEA affiliate) has challenged these features of the policy, and the conflict has not yet been resolved.

In Vanderbilt County, an outside consultant was hired to assist a committee of teachers and administrators in developing the policy. The resulting product was an impressive SBDM "Implementation Manual," later distributed to all council members. It includes not only the SBDM policy, but an overview of the SBDM component of KERA; district goals for SBDM; a description of the roles and responsibilities of the school board, superintendent, principal, and school council; a more detailed description of what councils are expected to do in each area of responsibility; a suggested schedule for phasing in SBDM over the next four years; guidelines for developing school policies; problem-solving techniques; and interviewing techniques. The appendices to the volume contain several suggested record-keeping forms.

These two districts represent an extreme in degree of consultation within the district. The degree of acceptance of board policy seems to reflect this difference. In both districts, development of the SBDM policy was perceived as very important by district leaders, who devoted a great deal of thought to the task. But the perception of who should be responsible for such an important task differed. Moreover, Vanderbilt County had resources with which to hire a consultant and a history of including school staff in important decisions.

Schools Implementing SBDM

As the chart shows, all of the study districts have at least one school implementing SBDM. In three of the study districts, only one or two schools voted to implement SBDM in 1991-92; one board had to appoint a school.

In Newtown Independent, district teachers never initiated a vote. Teachers and administrators alike reported that teachers have always had a great deal of input into decisionmaking and feel no need for SBDM. The superintendent instructed all schools in the district to vote on the issue for the purpose of identifying one school willing to implement. All schools in the district voted it down, so a school was appointed by the board to meet the June 30, 1991, deadline.

	Humphrey	Lamont	Newtown	Orange	Vanderbilt
Policy Adopted by January 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Schools Taking Teacher Initiated Vote on SBDM	3	2	0	2	4
Number of Schools Implementing SBDM for 1991-92	2 (only one council elected as of 9/1/91)	1	1	1	4
Council Training Received as of 9/1/91	18 hours	3 hours	6 hours	9 hours	18 hours
Council Membership					
Male	2	3	1	2	11
Female	4	3	5	5	13
Vision Statement and Bylaws Adopted	Yes	No	No	Yes	Info not available
Committees Appointed	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Info not available

In Vanderbilt County, by contrast, all but one school in the district voted to implement SBDM. The remaining school is quite small--only four teachers--and the superintendent reported that the staff felt no need for SBDM due to the small number of people. The regional KEA representative suggested that enthusiasm for SBDM is higher in this part of the state because of proximity to larger districts that have experimented with some forms of site-based management. She added that Vanderbilt County was moving toward SBDM prior to KERA.

Council Training

Training opportunities for school councils are abundant throughout the state, and board policy in all districts requires school councils to receive training (but does not specify the amount or type of training). The state department of education conducts two training sessions per month, each of which lasts two and one-half days. The training is free, but districts must cover expenses. Other organizations, such as KEA and KSBA, offer training periodically--either free or at a low cost--and many private consulting agencies are also available to train councils. In addition, some universities offer training on SBDM. Thus, school councils can choose training from a variety of sources, but may be limited by time and available funds. The chart shows that the five study districts are taking advantage of these opportunities to varying degrees. While the councils that have had the most training are encountering fewest problems, all the councils in the study plan for regular training in the future, and all have engaged in additional informal training activities. To date, only one district has provided extensive (though informal) training to members of the various committees appointed by the school council.

Council Policy Activities

A great deal of variation exists in the amount of work that councils in the five districts have done to date. Of the councils studied, the one working council in Humphrey County has been the most active in setting policy. In the spring of 1991, the members decided to focus on two of the eight mandated policy areas--determination of curriculum and issues relating to instructional practices. Twelve committees have been formed. Each faculty member must serve on at least one committee but may serve on more than one. Examples of committees and their activities are: the Buildings and Grounds Committee conducted a needs assessment on building space; the Substitute Teacher Committee surveyed substitute teachers and compiled suggestions for improving conditions for substitutes; the Attendance Policy Committee collected sample policies from other districts and formulated a new attendance policy; and the Academic Achievement Committee evaluated the current incentive program designed to improve student achievement and made recommendations for improvement. In addition, a specially formed committee composed totally of parents planned an orientation program for incoming high school freshmen and their parents, which was attended by a large crowd.

In Lamont County, no formal decision has been made about which of the eight areas the council will address, but six committees have been formed: finance, school improvement, PTO (to organize a PTO), discipline, attendance, and curriculum/performance testing. As of September 1, two committees had begun meeting. The School Improvement Committee has met and made recommendations for improving the physical environment of the school. The Finance Committee has done a great deal of research and is hoping to have a tentative budget prepared by the end of September. To date, the committee has met with the building principal, the finance officer for the district, and the school secretary--in addition to talking with state department officials--to learn more about the budgeting process. The committee has also made recommendations to the district for expenditure of Chapter II funds at the school and has surveyed the faculty to determine their budgetary needs for the upcoming school year.

The Newtown Independent council was elected in July, after the board designated a school to implement SBDM in June. In August, staff received six hours of training through a nearby state university and began planning the development of a mission statement and bylaws. As of September 1, no committees had been appointed, and the council was still meeting informally to plan its operation. Formal decisionmaking activities had not yet begun, but the committee is scheduled to adopt bylaws in September.

The one school council in Orange County has adopted a mission statement and bylaws that specify a regular monthly meeting date, as well as provide for interim meetings on call. This council appointed a number of committees: curriculum, discipline/rewards, extracurricular activities, instructional budget, lunchroom, maintenance, publicity, staff development, and testing/counseling. The council as a whole and the committees spent almost six months meeting informally and engaging in training and planning activities. They began formal decisionmaking meetings at the beginning of the new school year (July 1991) and have made decisions on major purchases of curricular programs. All committees have met, and most have developed vision statements and objectives for the coming year.

Vanderbilt County school councils also spent the spring of 1991 meeting informally for planning and training. They began formal meetings in July. Councils at the four SBDM schools have chosen to concentrate on only a few policy areas. Although these differ from school to school, most are focusing on discipline and instruction. Committees composed of teachers, parents, and students have been formed at all SBDM schools to study the selected policy areas.

The five districts studied during the past year are at very different stages of SBDM implementation. In part, these differences reflect the fact that they started implementation at different times. Even more important, however, may be the level of leadership provided by the principals at the SBDM schools. Those School Councils that are furthest along in acquiring training and developing policies are those whose principals are most enthusiastic about SBDM.

School Councils are also experiencing varying levels of difficulty in establishing new roles within the school systems, although none of them have had completely smooth sailing. Given that SBDM as a formal practice is new in all of these districts, it is not surprising that the transition to local decisionmaking is not easy. To date, major problems facing councils are of two types: (1) lack of information and knowledge on regulations that must be adhered to and procedures that must be followed, and (2) conflicts with district or school administrators related to the shifting of authority to school councils. These two problems will be discussed separately below.

(1) Lack of information and knowledge. The level of confusion council members are experiencing about what they are to do and how they are to go about it appears to vary somewhat by district, although all council members with whom we have talked agree that it has not been easy to figure out how to approach their tasks, given the lack of guidelines. Schools where the principal is thoroughly familiar with SBDM seem to be having less difficulty than those where the principal has received no more training than other council members. In addition, councils that have received the most training also appear to be struggling the least.

Some council members and administrators have expressed frustration over the seemingly impossible task of bringing council members up to the skill and knowledge level required to tackle their new policymaking role. One superintendent commented that he "doesn't even know where to begin" in sharing necessary information with the council. Another superintendent described the KERA regulation limiting council members to one-year terms as "a terrible mistake," because it will take council members most of their first year to get oriented and acquire the necessary information to perform the required tasks.

A teacher who serves on the Finance Committee of the school council in Lamont County expressed frustration at trying to locate necessary information:

> We began conducting research trying to determine what areas the money will have to go to and developing a tentative budget, and it doesn't sound like it's going to be very easy to do. We know that some of the money has to go to instruction, but exactly how that will have to be allocated, we don't know.... The people that we ask are helpful, but the question is, where does one seek help? It's difficult to know who to call, particularly at the department of education right now. [The department of education was undergoing reorganization at the time this interview was conducted.]

Other sources report that not only is it difficult to locate and internalize needed information, but the law itself is so broadly stated that it is difficult to locate consistent information. The principal of the school council in Humphrey County, when asked to identify the biggest problem the council has faced, commented:

> Well, again, finding somebody that knows a lot about it. There's not a lot of information, I don't feel. A lot of people can quote the law to you but when it gets down to asking a specific question, so much of it is left up to interpretation that many times you get four different answers if you ask four people.

(2) Shifting of Authority. School councils are in the early stages of formulating policy; therefore, the only areas in which shifts of authority are occurring at this date are personnel decisions and decisions about spending instructional funds.

Filling staff vacancies by school councils has turned out to be one of the most volatile areas of SBDM for some of the study districts, and nearly all school councils have dealt with this issue. KERA requires only that vacancies be filled by the principal (from a list submitted by the superintendent) after consultation with the school council, and different principals are interpreting "consultation" differently.

The school council in Humphrey County had, at the time of this writing, filled 10 staff vacancies--five certified and five classified. Most of these positions were filled with relative ease through the following procedure: The superintendent submitted a list of applicants to the principal, who shared them with the council and, when appropriate, the department chairperson. This group determined who should be interviewed, and the principal and department chair conducted the interviews and recommended one or more applicants to the school council. The council then voted whether or not to accept the recommendation. To date, the council has reached consensus--both with the principal and among its members--on all personnel decisions.

Although most personnel decisions have been easily made in Humphrey County--a district plagued in the past by political cronyism--filling some classified positions has been a source of tension. In one instance, the central office administration began the process of filling a secretarial position by interviewing applicants and then submitting applications to the school council. In the meantime, some applicants had submitted resumes to both the school and the central office, so the school council was aware of who some of the applicants were. When the school council did not receive the application of one individual whom members considered well-qualified for the position, the council requested additional applications from the superintendent. This process was repeated until the council received the desired application. Parties on both sides of the conflict described the motives of the other as "political," but, ultimately, the decisionmaking authority rested with the school principal. The principal described her thoughts on the shift in hiring authority:

> [Filling job vacancies] is not something I took on with a lot of joy, because that's not a nice thing--to tell people you can't hire them...I don't relish that part, but it is a part of it, and I think it's a big responsibility. I want to prove to people--I had several people in the community that told [applicants to call] me. And I explained to them, "We look at everybody's qualifications and the person who has the best qualifications and experience in that area will be the one hired".... One of the board members asked me, "What's gonna keep this from being just as political as it ever was?" And I said, "Nothing. If the principal wants it to be political, it will be." But, you know, I think it would be very shortsighted for any person in this position to hire somebody just because they liked them or somebody else liked them, because they're going to have to work in the same building with that person. If they can't do their job, somebody else is going to have to do it, and it may end up being them.

In Lamont County, the School Council has dealt with four staff vacancies, and the lack of an established procedure for doing this has caused some conflict. At issue is the question of how much "consultation" the principal is required to do with the council. The procedure utilized to date is as follows: When a vacancy occurs, the council determines whether or not to fill the vacancy. If council members decide to do so, the position is advertised for the required 30 days, during which time the superintendent forwards all applications to the principal. The principal reviews these applications with council members, who can provide input if they choose. The principal and department chair then screen the applicants, conduct the interviews, and select an applicant to fill the position. The principal notifies the council of the decision at the next meeting. Some council members have been dissatisfied with this level of consultation and were surprised that they had not been informed of all the candidates on one occasion (when there was a late application). The council has since discussed the need to establish a procedure for filling vacancies, but some disagreement continues among council members over the amount of consultation the principal should be required to do.

In Newtown Independent district, the principal reported that the council has made no personnel decisions and could not, since it still lacks bylaws.

The School Council in Orange County has interviewed applicants for six teaching positions and one janitorial position (all unexpected vacancies that arose over the summer). In each case, the principal accepted the council's recommendation and the person the council recommended was hired.

All SBDM councils in Vanderbilt County have dealt with staff vacancies, and one council hired a new principal. The superintendent reported that all councils have been involved in the hiring process from start to finish, including participating in interviews and making a recommendation to the principal. Principals have, in nearly all cases, chosen to follow the councils' recommendations.

Potential Problems

Staff in the five districts have expressed some fears--not yet realized--about the shifting of authority to school councils. In some cases, principals feared that potential conflicts in the parent-teacher organization might become overt with the formation of the school council. In other cases, the possibility was envisioned that the principal, who no longer has the protection of tenure, might be the victim of disputes between a school council and central administration. In general, school staff members worried about whether it was fair to ask teachers and parents to make tough personnel decisions that might well alienate co-workers and neighbors. Administrators acknowledge that they often have such problems as well, but point out that they are expected to make difficult decisions, have appropriate training, and are compensated for a certain amount of unpleasantness.

It is also clear that councils' lack of training and experience in selecting personnel can cause problems. Many parents and teachers now serving on councils have no interviewing experience and, without guidance or training from administrators or other sources, may have difficulty knowing how to judge qualified applicants. In addition, the lack of an established procedure for dealing with staff vacancies can further complicate the process. Councils need training or guidance on such practical issues as when to go into executive session to discuss personnel, what procedure to follow in notifying rejected applicants (so that the applicants do not hear of their rejection "through the grapevine," as has happened in at least one instance), and how to handle the situation when a council member has applied for a position within the school.

Closing Thoughts

All five districts studied this past year are implementing the SBDM component of KERA on schedule and in accordance with the law. Differences exist among the districts, however, in their aggressiveness of implementation and their interpretation of the law. The lack of specific SBDM implementation guidelines within KERA is no accident. The legislature intended to leave much of the practical aspects of implementation to local districts, in keeping with the overall philosophy of local decisionmaking. A teacher in one of the districts

expressed the view that school councils are struggling with the lack of guidelines because "we've been spoon-fed so long we don't know how to think." Vanderbilt County leadership has taken fullest advantage of the lack of SBDM guidelines by enlisting district staff to develop an implementation manual and by supporting all schools in their decisions to implement SBDM.

Overall, districts in which the school board, superintendent, and building principals are supportive of SBDM are experiencing the least confusion and conflict over the transfer of authority to the school level. It appears that support of the building principal is particularly vital. In schools where the principal is reluctant to delegate significant decisionmaking authority, the transfer of authority may be difficult. While KERA clearly states that councils have authority to make decisions in several areas, most councils in our study districts have looked to the principal for guidance in nearly all areas, from determining how much training is needed and where to get it, to determining which areas to focus on and where to go for information. In the absence of such leadership, councils are struggling, and council members appear to be either uncertain as to how to correct the situation or unwilling to risk intensifying conflicts within the school in an effort to assert their authority.

SURVEY RESULTS
SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF ATTITUDES TOWARD SBDM

To learn how rural school district staffs are responding to SBDM, AEL administered a short survey in two of the districts, Humphrey County and Lamont County. The survey was distributed to all staff members in the two districts, including administrators, teachers, and classified (noncertified) personnel, as well as to school board members. A total of 308 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 57 percent. This rate varied among the role groups, with 63 percent of certified staff responding, 48 percent of classified staff, and 40 percent of school board members. The questions and responses are listed below.

Are you familiar with the school-based decisionmaking component of KERA?

	Yes	No	No response
Administrators	94%	6%	
Teachers	90%	9%	.5%
Classified staff	50%	50%	
School board members	100%	0%	
OVERALL	77%	22%	.3%

How familiar are you with what the law requires of school districts regarding SBDM?

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Slightly familiar	Unfamiliar
Administrators	35%	59%	6%	0%
Teachers	11%	65%	21%	4%
Classified staff	6%	22%	30%	42%
School board members	75%	0%	25%	0%
OVERALL	11%	50%	23%	16%

Circle the phrase that best describes your present reaction to SBDM:

	Very positive	More pos. than neg.	Neutral/ Ambivalent	More neg. than pos.	Very neg.	Don't know enough about it to say
Adminis.	18%	41%	35%	6%	0%	0%
Teachers	17%	35%	35%	4%	1%	7%
Classified	5%	6%	30%	6%	5%	47%
School board	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%	0%
OVERALL	13%	26%	34%	5%	2%	20%

How did you vote on SBDM, or how would you vote if a vote were taken today (or if you were permitted to vote)?

	In favor	Against	Not sure	Not app./ No response	Private info.
Adminis.	29%	6%	18%	47%	0%
Teachers	52%	10%	26%	9%	2%
Classified	16%	8%	32%	44%	0%
School board	25%	0%	0%	75%	0%
OVERALL	39%	9%	27%	23%	1%

In addition to the above questions, three optional questions requiring narrative responses were listed. Results were as follows:

Briefly describe why you did (or would) vote the way you did on SBDM.

Major reasons for voting in favor of SBDM:

(1) Those people who are closest to the students and most involved at each school can make better decisions about what is needed at that school (30 respondents).
(2) SBDM will improve education (17 respondents).
(3) Since SBDM is mandatory, we may as well get started (7 respondents).

Major reasons for voting against SBDM:

(1) It will increase political activity within schools (3 respondents).
(2) We would like to see other schools try SBDM before plunging in (3 respondents).

Major reasons for uncertainty on how to vote:

(1) Not well-informed enough about SBDM to make an informed decision at this time (27 respondents).

If you could change anything about the current guidelines for SBDM, what would it be?

(1) Too early to say what needs to be changed/don't know/nothing should be changed (28 respondents).
(2) Change composition of the school council or the manner of selection of council members (specific suggestions varied, with each role group tending to focus on its own interests) (14 respondents).
(3) Measures are needed to ensure that SBDM does not become political (specific suggestions varied) (11 respondents).
(4) More and better training is needed (8 respondents).
(5) The school council needs more authority (6 respondents).

Other comments on SBDM:

The largest number of respondents who made general comments (16) expressed a positive view of SBDM. Examples of responses were:

"I believe within the next few years, if given a chance, the SBDM panel will be a plus toward parent and community involvement in their school."

"Slow getting started, but expect positive results down the road."

"In time, I believe this will make schools more responsive to the public. I am optimistic about SBDM if bounds are set to govern them."

Six respondents expressed doubt that SBDM will work:

"I have many doubts that SBDM will be the positive force for school improvement that is being proclaimed. I have seen no research showing that improved student achievement results."

"Parts [of SBDM] have merit. Concept means well, but is not operational."

This publication was produced in whole or in part with funds from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, under contract number RP91002002. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

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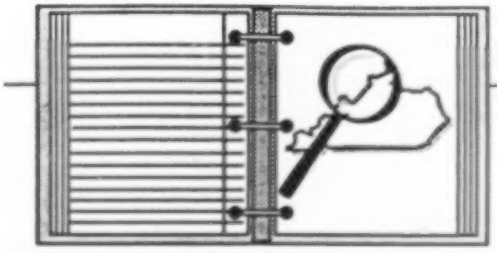

NOTES FROM THE FIELD:
Education Reform in Rural Kentucky

AEL

Vol. 1, Number 3 December 1991

Family Resource/Youth Services Centers

EDITOR'S NOTE: *You'll notice that we're introducing a new format for "Notes" with this issue on family resource centers and youth services centers. The wraparound pages contain a summary listing of our findings during visits to centers operating in two counties; an overview of the integrated services aspect of KERA; and, finally, a discussion of what we think we learned during our visits. Details on our findings are contained in the individual profile sheets. In all cases, we've included first-person accounts from parents and students about how they think the centers have helped them.*

To gather data for this issue of "Notes From the Field," we spent three days visiting three family resource centers (FRC) and one youth services center (YSC) in two districts—Humphrey County, a district we studied last fall, and Orange County. All centers and counties have been assigned pseudonyms to conceal their identities.

Here's what we found:

- In spite of the short start-up time, all centers we visited are fully operational and are providing numerous programs and services that were not previously available or easily accessible in their communities.

- The three FRCs we visited are not directly providing all six services set forth in KERA, but are focusing on health services and parent and child education. The YSC is providing all six services listed in KERA.

- All centers appear to be successfully coordinating community services, and all are receiving strong support from school district administrators and building principals. In some cases, however, communication between the center and teachers at the school has been a problem. In each case, center staff are working to correct the situation.

- Advisory councils are in place at all centers, but some councils are playing a more active role than others.

- Funding from the KERA grants has not been adequate to provide all needed services, but staff at all centers have been extremely resourceful in locating other sources of funding and in-kind matches.

- LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, all centers have already affected the lives of several students and families in ways that seem likely to result in improved student attendance and performance.

Re 019223

This synthesis of findings is part of a qualitative study of education reform in rural Kentucky being conducted by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) to provide feedback to educators and policymakers on the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990. Two researchers are documenting reform efforts in four rural Kentucky districts that have been assigned the pseudonyms of Lamont County, Newtown Independent, Orange County, and Vanderbilt County. For more information about this project or to request that names be added to the mailing list, contact either researcher, Pam Coe (800/624-9120) or Patty Kannapel (502/581-0324), State Policy program, AEL, P. O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325.

OVERVIEW OF THE INTEGRATED SERVICES COMPONENT OF KERA

Family resource centers and youth services centers are a unique feature of KERA. Attached to schools, they ensure that needy children and families receive services to solve problems that prevent the children from doing their best in school. Such centers are being discussed across the nation, but only Kentucky is implementing them statewide.

Interagency Task Force

KERA required the governor to appoint a 16-member task force to formulate a five-year plan for the implementation of the centers, to award grants to school districts for operation of the centers, and to monitor implementation of the centers for a five-year period.

The Centers

Family resource centers are mandated to be located in or near all elementary schools in which 20 percent or more of the student body is eligible to receive free school meals, while youth services centers are to be located in or near middle and high schools that meet the same criteria.

Family resource centers must address, but are not limited to, the following components:

- assistance with fulltime child care for children ages two and three;
- assistance with after-school child care for children ages four through twelve;
- health and education services for new and expectant parents;
- education to enhance parenting skills and education for preschool parents and their children;
- support and training for child day care providers; and
- health services or referral to health services, or both.

Youth services centers must address, but are not limited to, the following components:

- health services or referral to health services;
- referral to social services;
- employment counseling, training and placement for youth;
- summer and parttime job development for youth;
- substance abuse services or referral to such services; and
- family crisis and mental health counseling or referral.

Timelines

KERA required that local districts develop initial plans for the centers by June 30, 1991, and that centers be established in or near one-fourth of eligible schools by June 30, 1992. Remaining centers are to be phased in over a five-year period. For the 1991-92 school year, 134 centers serving 232 schools are in place around the state.

Funding

The legislature appropriated $9.5 million for the centers for the 1991-92 school year; grants were awarded on a competitive basis, with no school getting less than $10,000 or more than $90,000. The state Cabinet for Human Resources administers the grants, although school districts apply for them and administer the funds. State Human Resources staff monitor the centers and hold networking meetings for center staff.

DISCUSSION

If the success of family resource centers and youth services centers is based on improved student performance and higher graduation rates, it is a bit early to make any definitive statements about the success of the centers we visited. It is possible to say, however, that the centers are being utilized regularly by parents and students and that they have already made a difference in the lives of many clients. We were impressed at what these centers have been able to do in the short time they have been in place. Center staff are enthused and energized by their work; at their initiative, the typical work day is 10 to 12 hours. Staff in all locations are already feeling a need to increase staff size and funding, and some centers have expanded through in-kind contributions.

We saw little evidence of major policy hurdles to successful implementation of the centers. Everyone we interviewed was delighted that the centers are in place and expressed the view that the centers are providing a service that would not have existed otherwise—the coordination of services for families and students in need of help. All our respondents understood that the major idea behind the centers was to enable students to do well in school by solving problems that prevent them from learning. All felt they had begun to see positive changes in the children and the families served by the centers.

An element of unfairness may exist in the way centers are funded, when one considers that centers must rely extensively on donations and in-kind contributions to meet the needs of their service areas. Community resources strongly affect how successful center staff can be in locating such contributions. An impoverished community with little industry and few resources (such as in Humphrey County) will have more difficulty obtaining matching funds and services than more affluent communities (such as in Orange County). The Red Falls FRC staff clearly face a greater struggle than staff at the Orange County centers in obtaining additional funding. Even so, the Red Falls staff have been quite successful at eliciting contributions from nearby merchants and at utilizing staff and services of community agencies.

Another potential problem reported by staff at two of the centers is the difficulty associated with obtaining services for the "working poor"—families who do not qualify for public assistance but cannot afford adequate health care. We were impressed during our visits to the centers at the number of serious health problems that had developed and become chronic in this population of students. Even with the aid of an interagency agreement in Orange County, center staff obtained services for these students only with considerable difficulty; the families apparently could not have obtained such services without the centers' help. So far, centers have been able to meet the needs of students from such families largely by persuading health care providers to provide services free or on a sliding scale. Over the long term, however, center staff may exhaust their resources and influence in this arena.

CORRECTIONS TO SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF "NOTES"

Our overview of the school-based decisionmaking component of KERA in our last issue (page 3) indicated that school councils have the option of deciding whether or not they want to be responsible for determining the number of persons to be employed in each job classification. In reality, councils *must* assume this responsibility.

The "Potential Problems" section of the same issue (page 10) suggested that principals no longer have tenure under KERA. In fact, principals retain tenure, but are no longer protected by the Fair Demotion Law.

Family Service Center School Nurse:

> In this particular area we find that health is really important.... If [families] have health education and the parents have health access, and the children are well, they are going to come to school most of the time.... That is one of the reasons [we emphasize health] and that is another way we get to families too, because that is a real important issue with our families. They want to be well, they want their kids to be looked at, they care about their kids. So they will say, "Go see the nurse," and that is when we know they are in trouble. You would be surprised at the kids that come in every day and say, "My mom told me to come see the nurse."... When I call [a parent] at work [though] it's fear. You know they are saying, "How am I going to come and get that child? Do I have to take a day off from work? Am I going to have to leave to take this child [home]?"... They are the ones, the working poor, who have the greatest fear of losing time [through illness].

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Humphrey County

Red Falls Elementary Family Resource Center

General Information

Facility. The Red Falls Elementary FRC is housed in a double-wide mobile home located behind the school. The center contains a classroom/activity room, office, clinic area, play area, and bathroom.

Staff. Staff consists of a fulltime director; parttime parent coordinator, parent assistant, community arts coordinator, literacy coordinator, and adult education tutors; and numerous volunteers.

Hours. Hours are 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. three days per week; 11:00 a.m. to 7 p.m. two days per week; and 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. one Saturday per month.

Funding

Grant size. About $50,000.

In-kind matches. The school district provides the facility, pays all utilities and insurance, furnished paint for the facility, and provides GED instructors. Area businesses donated furnishings and supplies to the center, and parents volunteered their time to prepare the facility for opening. Several community agencies have made the commitment to provide staff and equipment for future workshops and programs.

Programs/Services

Based on a spring 1990 parent survey, the Red Falls FRC advisory council identified health services as the highest priority of the six services listed in KERA. Child care was given a low priority.

Child care. Parents in need of child care are referred to a local agency; the FRC assists with paperwork and transportation. Center staff are exploring the possibility of organizing and training a parent support network to provide occasional child care services.

Health and education services for new and expectant parents. Prenatal classes are offered two hours each week.

Parent and child education. The center offers a weekly family reading program in which parents and preschoolers spend two hours reading books and writing stories. Center staff plan to integrate the activity into classrooms, as the parents become more comfortable in the school setting. GED classes and sewing classes are also offered weekly, as are periodic workshops on such topics as self-esteem. In addition, an eight-week course in effective parenting has just begun at the center.

Support and training for day care providers. The center is helping several women become licensed family day care providers.

Health services. The FRC recently sponsored a blood pressure screening at a local grocery story and will offer first aid classes and a nursing clinic in the spring.

Coordination of Community Services

Local community agencies in Humphrey County have been involved with the Red Falls FRC from the start. A local self-help parent group provides staff to teach the family reading program and GED class and is also responsible for helping child care providers become licensed family day care providers. Effective parenting classes are being presented by the local comprehensive care agency, and nursing staff and students from a nearby college conduct health education courses and staff a health clinic.

Coordination with School Staff

Red Falls FRC staff report that they have had mixed success to date in coordinating their services with school staff. The Red Falls Elementary principal and the school district assistant superintendent were driving forces behind planning the center, and both have been very supportive of and closely involved in center activities. Teachers at the school, however, have been less involved and supportive. The principal attributed this to the fact that teachers are currently implementing two other aspects of KERA—school-based decisionmaking and the nongraded primary program—and are overwhelmed with the work that this requires. In addition, both the principal and center director acknowledge that communication between the FRC and teachers needs to be improved so that teachers are more aware of what the center has to offer, and of their role in ensuring that students are served by the center. Center staff have presented an awareness session at a school staff meeting and are also developing procedures that will easily enable teachers to refer students in need of services to the center.

Orange County

O'Shea Elementary Family Resource Center

General Information

Facility. O'Shea Elementary is an open-concept school with pods located in separate buildings; the FRC occupies one-half a pod. The center contains an office area, educational area, clinic, and bathroom.

Staff. The center employs a fulltime director and nurse, and two parttime secretaries (one of whom is also school parent coordinator).

Hours. The hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. five days a week. The center is open for scheduled evening events and maintains a 24-hour hotline (through call-forwarding to the director's home).

Funding

Grant size. About $50,000.

In-kind matches. The school district provides the facility, which it repaired. The district also pays office expenses, provides part of the nurse's and parttime secretary's salary, and pays for some transportation costs. Area businesses donated some center furnishings and medical supplies for the clinic. Parents and the Salvation Army donated clothing for the center's clothes bank, and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds will be used to provide staff for the summer recreation program.

Programs/Services

Like Red Falls, O'Shea Elementary staff and parent volunteers administered a parent survey prior to submitting a proposal to determine what services were needed in the area. Results were similar to those of Red Falls: health services was identified as a high priority, while child care was a low priority.

Child care. Referrals are made to other agencies.

Health and education services for new and expectant parents. Referrals are made to other community agencies; staff assist families in obtaining services if necessary.

Parent and child education. The O'Shea FRC will offer four parent-training sessions this year, the first of which will be a first aid workshop. The topics of the three remaining sessions will be decided after getting input from parents who attend the first session. In addition, the center will offer a summer recreation program for students, with an emphasis on traveling outside the community.

Support and training for day care providers. Referrals are made to other community agencies.

Health services. A fulltime registered nurse serves student health needs every day, and local health care providers conduct free health, vision, and dental screenings at the center and will provide free or reduced-price medical services upon request by center staff. In addition, the O'Shea FRC staff have referred children and parents to other health service providers, acting as case managers and advocates for those families who were unable to get services without this assistance. This has involved visiting homes, as well as accompanying families to health and social service agencies. The center also provides a clothes bank for students.

Other Services. As its contribution to the center, a local business sponsors a family night once a month at the school, which is designed to bring parents and their children together for recreational and educational activities.

Coordination of Community Services

All of Orange County's centers are served by an interagency cooperation agreement, which establishes an advisory committee composed of three school district representatives and one representative from each participating agency. The committee meets quarterly or as needed to oversee programs offered at the three centers in the county. All agencies agree to provide certain services to the district through the centers. The O'Shea FRC director is working to increase involvement with local agencies; the center has had tremendous cooperation from local health care providers and from the Salvation Army. Staff are working to enlist similar support from other area social service agencies.

Coordination with School Staff

As in Humphrey County, the O'Shea FRC proposal was developed with tremendous input and support from school district administrators and the O'Shea Elementary principal. Center staff report that this support is ongoing. Most teachers have also been supportive. Center staff are

Orange County

Locke Elementary Family Resource Center

General Information

Facility. The Locke Elementary FRC is located just inside the main entrance to the school and is housed in a small office, which serves as both the director's headquarters and the nurse's clinic.

Staff. Staff consists of a parttime director, nurse, financial secretary, and secretary.

Hours. Center hours are from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. five days per week, and evenings as needed.

Funding

Grant size. About $30,000.

In-kind matches. The school district provides the facility. Local health care providers make available free services (e.g., dental screenings and personal counseling) and equipment the children need, such as eyeglasses. The sign identifying the center was donated.

Programs/Services

Like the other FRCs we visited, the Locke Elementary center focuses strongly on health care, based on results of a parent survey administered last spring. Because the school is small, the FRC has only parttime staff, although it is available fulltime. The director works parttime as center director and parttime as assistant principal, while the secretary splits her time as center secretary and school librarian. The financial secretary deals with school finances as well as center finances. The parttime nurse has another parttime job outside the school.

Child care. Referrals are made to other agencies.

Health and education services for new and expectant parents. Referrals are made to other community agencies; staff will assist families in obtaining services if necessary.

Parent and child education. The Locke FRC brings in one speaker each month to address students, a few classes at a time, about selected topics. Parents are invited to attend these sessions. The center is also referring families to other services, including training opportunities provided through the youth services center at the high school. Because Locke is in such an isolated community, the FRC provides transportation to services, if necessary.

Support and training for day care providers. Referrals are made to other community agencies.

Health services. The Locke FRC employs a parttime nurse. Students visit the center clinic on their own or when they are referred by teachers. As health problems are identified, staff act as advocates and case managers in helping students and families receive needed medical services.

Coordination of Community Services

Since staff are just beginning to develop relationships with local agencies, they rely heavily on the high school's YSC director (who serves as the community services coordinator for all the Orange County centers) to assist them in this endeavor. Local volunteer groups (like the volunteer fire department) work closely with the center.

Coordination with School Staff

Like all centers in Orange County, the Locke FRC was developed with strong support and input from school district administrators. Staff enjoy continued support from district administrators and report that teachers are becoming increasingly aware and supportive of center services.

Role of Advisory Council

The Locke FRC advisory council's role is clearly defined in the center proposal, and the council meets approximately once a month to receive an update on center activities and to make programmatic decisions. The 11-member council includes three school representatives, three parents, three community representatives, and two students.

Orange County

Youth Services Center

General Information

Facility. The Youth Services Center is located throughout the high school complex. Several staff members occupy offices in or near the main office; a student "lounge" area, identified as the youth services center, is located in a small building outside the main structure.

Staff. Fulltime staff consists of a director, crisis counselor, substance abuse counselor, and secretary. Parttime staff includes a counselor, two nurses, parent coordinator, and teen pregnancy program director.

Hours. Hours are 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. five days per week, and 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. two nights per week, in addition to evening hours for special events.

Funding

Grant size. About $85,000.

In-kind matches. The school district has donated approximately $30,000 in in-kind contributions. About $65,000 in in-kind contributions has come from local agencies and groups, including a $40,000 grant from the local comprehensive care agency. The parttime counselor is an intern, volunteering her time.

Programs/Services

Based on a student survey administered last spring, the center is providing all of the services listed in KERA.

Health services. Two parttime nurses are available to students during the lunch hour, and the center offers a teen pregnancy program that includes a weekly parenting and prenatal class for pregnant teens. Center staff also refer students in need of health services to community agencies or health care providers and assist them in obtaining needed services. During the first quarter of the school year, center staff concentrated on problems that interfered with students' school work—needs for eyeglasses, dental services, and clothing.

Referrals to social services. The YSC director, as coordinator of community services for all three Orange County centers, has extensive contacts with social service agencies in Orange County. Center staff frequently accompany students to appropriate agencies and assist them in obtaining the needed services. In addition, community and agency nights are planned to inform the public about available services.

Employment counseling/training/placement. Evening GED classes are offered at the center, and center staff offer career awareness sessions to any class in the school upon request from the teacher. All freshmen have filled out Career Interest Inventories for the center. The youth services center student lounge area is open during the lunch hour and contains numerous informational brochures on employment training, career opportunities, and post-high school education.

Job development. Center staff are working with JTPA staff and local businesses and agencies to develop summer and parttime jobs for students. In addition, a job referral service is being developed with the assistance of local businesses and the Department of Employment Services. A Job Fair is planned for the spring of 1992.

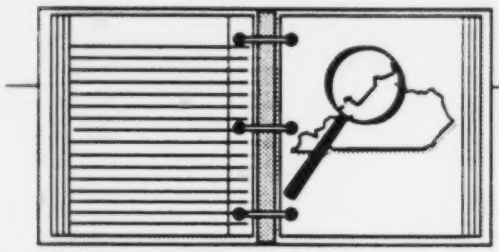
Substance abuse services. A fulltime substance abuse counselor is on staff at the center. Classes for parents and students are planned.

Family crisis/mental health services. The center employs a fulltime crisis counselor who sees a number of students each day. The intern, a prevention specialist adolescent counselor, also works with students. The center lounge provides a safe haven to several students during the lunch hour by providing a comfortable setting where students can read informational materials, watch television, and socialize.

Other services. The center has developed a database on student needs, beginning with 387 family profiles on incoming freshmen. Center staff have begun a "Thank-You Parents" program, calling or writing to thank parents whose children have a B-average or better or have demonstrated some dramatic improvement.

Coordination of Community Services

The YSC director reports good cooperation between agencies and the center in providing services to individual students. The local comprehensive care center has provided a counselor and parenting aide, and a local obstetrics group is supporting the salary of the teen pregnancy program director. The Salvation Army and local rehabilitation center have worked closely with the YSC to serve individual students.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD:
Education Reform in Rural Kentucky

Volume 2, Number 1 April 1992

AEL

Special Feature: KERA Finance Measures

For the past few months, we have been analyzing how the KERA finance measures have affected the four rural school districts we are studying. Our analysis to date reveals that:

- All four districts received a funding increase under KERA, but the amount of these increases differed substantially, depending on the property wealth of the district and the local tax effort.
- Given that a large proportion of any education budget goes to personnel costs, it is not surprising that the bulk of new funding during the 1990-91 school year in all study districts was used for salary increases.
- Two of the four districts received increases large enough to apply some of the new money toward improving instruction through increased staff development, hiring additional personnel, and purchasing additional teaching and library supplies.
- The major effect of KERA funding on students in all four districts has been through the establishment of categorical programs designed to meet the needs of at-risk students: the extended school program, preschool program, and family resource and youth services centers. All four districts offer the extended school program, and three offer preschool programs. Only one of the four districts applied for and received a grant for family resource and youth services centers during 1991-92.
- Funding for the 1990-91 school year in three of the four districts appeared to be sufficient to meet the perceived needs of teachers and students. One district, however, continues to suffer from lack of funds.
- Attitudes toward the new funding formula differ among the districts, depending upon how much new funding was received. Respondents in the two districts that received the largest funding increases expressed a largely positive view toward the funding formula. Respondents in the other two districts expressed a mostly negative view—in one case because district staff felt they still had insufficient funds, and in the other case because staff felt they would only be able to maintain the district's current level while surrounding districts would be able to make a number of improvements.

A more detailed description of these findings is provided in the four district profiles included in this issue. This issue also contains an overview of KERA finance measures, a discussion of statewide implementation of the SEEK formula, and a discussion of our findings.

This synthesis of findings is part of a qualitative study of education reform in rural Kentucky being conducted by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) to provide feedback to educators and policymakers on the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990. Two researchers are documenting reform efforts in four rural Kentucky districts that have been assigned the pseudonyms of: Lamont County, Newtown Independent, Orange County, and Vanderbilt County. For more information about this project contact either researcher—Pam Coe (800/624-9120) or Patty Kannapel (502/581-0324), State Policy program, AEL, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325.

Overview of KERA Finance Measures

In 1985, representatives of 66 Kentucky school districts filed a lawsuit against the Commonwealth of Kentucky charging that the state's method of financing public schools placed too much emphasis on local resources and resulted in an inadequate and unequal education around the state. The lawsuit culminated in a 1989 Kentucky Supreme Court ruling that the state's entire system of public schooling was unconstitutional. The 1990 Kentucky General Assembly was ordered to reshape the public education system, including its financing (Miller, Noland, & Schaaf, 1990).

The SEEK Program

KERA established a new funding formula titled "Support Education Excellence in Kentucky" (SEEK), which is made up of several components designed to equalize education funding around the state.

Guaranteed amount of money per pupil. The SEEK program guarantees each district a specified amount of money per pupil, with additional funds allocated to cover the costs of transportation and of educating at-risk students, exceptional children, and students in the home/hospital program. For the 1990-91 school year, the guaranteed base amount (not counting the four "add-ons" listed above) was $2,305 per pupil; for 1991-92, the amount is $2,420.

The adjusted base guarantee (base amount plus add-ons) is reached by requiring districts to levy a minimum equivalent tax rate of 30 cents per $100 of assessed valuation of property and motor vehicles in the district. Districts may raise those revenues by levying one or more of the following: a general property tax, motor vehicle tax, occupational tax, utility tax, or excise tax on income. If a local board fails to set a rate of at least 30 cents, its members can be removed from office. In addition, all real property throughout the state must be assessed at 100 percent of its fair cash value by July 1, 1994. Revenue produced locally by the 30 cent rate is deducted from the guaranteed amount, and the state makes up the difference—called equalizing.

Example: We will pretend, for the sake of clarity, that a fictitious Kentucky district, Wilson County, has no add-ons for exceptional, at-risk, and home/hospital students or for transportation (an unrealistic situation). This means that the district's guaranteed base amount for 1990-91 was $2,305 per pupil. If the district's assessed property value were $110,000 per pupil, the 30 cent tax rate would generate $330 per pupil. The state would, therefore, provide the additional $1,975 needed to reach the $2,305 guaranteed base.

Tier I. Local boards can generate additional revenue by increasing their tax rate to provide as much as 15 percent above the guaranteed SEEK base (with add-ons included). The state will "equalize" the increase in districts where the per pupil property assessment is less than 150 percent of the statewide average per pupil assessment. This amount was set at $225,000 for the 1990-92 biennium, based on a *projected* 1990-91 average per pupil property assessment of $150,000. Districts with an assessed property value per pupil of $225,000 ($150,000 times 150 percent) or higher receive no equalizing funds from the state regardless of how high they raise their local rate.

Example: Wilson County, with its guaranteed base of $2,305, is permitted to provide up to $346 more per pupil (15 percent of $2,305) in Tier I by increasing local taxes. Since the district's assessed property value per pupil is less than $225,000, the state will provide part of this $346. To determine the ratio of state and local Tier I funding, the per pupil assessed property value of $110,000 is divided by $225,000 to produce a ratio of 49/51 local to state. This means that the local district will provide almost half of the $346 per pupil ($170) and the state will provide the rest.

Local districts can elect to move only partially into Tier I funding, and they will still receive "equalizing" funds from the state pro rata.

Tier II. Districts may increase their tax rate to provide up to an additional 30 percent of the funds guaranteed by the state combined with Tier I funds, but this tax increase must be approved by a vote of the people, and the funds will not be equalized by the state. If the district already has a tax rate that places it in Tier II, no referendum is required.

Example: Wilson County can increase its tax rate to provide an additional $795 per pupil ($2,305 plus $346 times 30 percent), for a total per pupil revenue of $3,446.

Guarantees/limits on increases in state funding. To ensure that no district received a sharp decrease or an unmanageably large increase in state funding during the first two years of KERA, all districts in the state were guaranteed at least an eight percent increase in state funding for the 1990-91 school year and at least a five percent increase for 1991-92. Increases in state funding could not exceed 25 percent either year.

Additional State Funds

Under KERA, the state also allocates funds for a number of mandated programs (see page 3). At the district level, state funding is provided to cover the preschool program, extended school services program for students who need additional time to achieve educational goals, technology, professional development, gifted and talented education, and remediation. In addition, grants are available on a competitive basis to establish family resource and youth services centers.

State Funding for Mandated Programs

	1990-91	1991-92
Extended school services (ESS)	$21,400,000	$53,000,000 (recently cut in half due to state budget shortfall)
Professional development (district allocation)	$ 1,100,000	$ 3,500,000
Preschool program	$14,300,000 (serving 5,600)	$29,800,000 (serving 11,000)
Family resource centers/ youth services centers		$ 9,500,000* (134 centers serving 232 schools)
Technology	$48,000,000 in escrow for 1990-92, awaiting development of a state technology plan	
Remediation	$13,800,000	$13,800,000
Gifted and Talented	$ 6,000,000	$ 6,000,000

*First year of funding

(Source: Kentucky Department of Education and Office of Education Accountability, personal contacts, February-March, 1992)

School Construction Funds

KERA generates additional funding for school construction, with the goal of "more equitable distribution of school facilities among the school districts" (Office of Education Accountability, 1991, p. 25). To participate in the construction program, local districts must levy an equivalent tax rate of at least five cents (in addition to the basic 30 cents required by SEEK). This five cents is equalized in the same way as Tier I, once the money has been committed to debt service.

Statewide Implementation of the SEEK Formula

Increase and equalization of funds

During the 1990-91 school year, about $500 million new dollars were provided to Kentucky school districts. Of this amount, $378.7 million came from the state and $111.6 million came from local sources. The average state and local spending per pupil increased from $2,918 in 1989-90 to $3,460 in 1990-91. When funding for categorical programs is included, the 1990-91 average expenditure per pupil was $4,176 (Augenblick, 1991).[1]

Not only has funding for education increased under KERA, but the disparity in per pupil revenue among districts has decreased substantially, according to a recent evaluation of the SEEK program conducted for the state department of education (Augenblick, 1991). At the extremes, one relatively wealthy district in the state expended $3,201 per pupil in 1989-90; this amount increased by only $98 to $3,299 for the 1990-91 school year. A poorer district in the state, however, increased its per pupil spending by $1,046, from $2,402 to $3,448 (*Courier-Journal*, September 13, 1990).

The Augenblick report (1991) noted that, while average per pupil spending was more equal than before, some inequities remain. The six wealthiest Kentucky districts continue to generate significantly higher per pupil revenues than average. These districts, in addition to having the highest property values, also have relatively high tax rates. Augenblick also reported that, while average teacher salary has increased significantly in all districts under KERA, the disparity among districts in average teacher salary continues to be great.

Tier I

For the 1990-91 school year, the legislature estimated that one-fourth of the districts would take advantage of Tier I and, therefore, allocated $20 million for the Tier I program. In reality, 169 of Kentucky's 176 school districts (96 percent) participated in Tier I and 108 of these raised local taxes to the top of Tier I, generating the full 15 percent beyond the guaranteed amount allowed without a popular vote. As a

[1]It should be noted that the 1990-91 figures in the Augenblick report are based on projections. Final figures may vary slightly.

result, districts received only about 45 percent of the state equalizing funds guaranteed by the SEEK formula (Augenblick, 1991; *Courier-Journal*, August 18, 1990).

Tier II

Fifty-seven school districts were in the Tier II funding level during the 1990-91 school year, but none had to place the issue before the voters because their local tax rates were already set at Tier II levels before the passage of KERA (Augenblick, 1991).

Guarantees/Limits on Increases in State Funding

Eighteen districts received the minimum eight percent increase in state funding for the 1990-91 school year; all would have received less if the eight percent minimum had not been in place. Fifty-one districts received the maximum 25 percent increase; 29 would have received more if the 25 percent limit had not been in place. For 1991-92, a number of districts did not receive the full five percent increase because of pro rata reductions that resulted from insufficient state funds. No districts received a 25 percent increase in 1991-92 (Kentucky Department of Education, 1991).

Construction Program

For the 1990-91 school year, all but two districts levied the five cents required to participate in the school construction program. Over half of these districts received equalization funding. The state appropriation for school construction in 1990-91 was $10 million, which was distributed to districts by a pro rata formula (Office of Education Accountability, 1991). A state department of education official estimates that nearly $300 million was spent on new construction after the passage of KERA, compared to roughly $50 million before the reform law was passed.

Funding for the 1992-1994 Biennium

Given the state's substantial budget shortfall, education funding fared relatively well in the 1992 session of the General Assembly.

The per pupil guaranteed base amount is held at $2,420 for the 1992-93 school year but increases to $2,495 in 1993-94. The Tier I program is expected to be fully funded for the next biennium, and the equalization levels for the Tier I and school construction programs increase to $280,000 of assessed valuation per pupil. All districts are guaranteed to receive at least the same amount of funding per pupil they received in 1991-92, and no limit is placed on the amount of increase in state funding that districts can receive.

Funding for most categorical programs increases in the 1992-94 biennium. Districts will receive $1[illegible] per pupil for professional development each year (up from $5 per pupil). Funding for the preschool program increases slightly: $33 million is allocated for 1992-93 and $37 million for 1993-94. Family resource and youth services centers are expected to receive about $16 million in 1992-93 and about $26 million in 1993-94. The state technology program is expected to receive $15 million over the next two years, to add to the $48 million now in escrow. Funding for gifted and talented programs will be held at $6 million for each year of the biennium.

Remediation programs are perhaps suffering the most from the budget shortfall. Funding for 1992 summer extended school services has already been cut, and the 1992-94 budget allocates about $33 million each year to the extended school services program. This represents a slight increase over 1991-92, once the 1992 funding cuts are taken into consideration. However, since districts initially expected much more funding in 1991-92 than they actually received and since the 1992-94 extended school services budget is less than the original 1991-92 budget, many district officials regard the funding level for the next two years as a reduction.

Another wrinkle in remediation funding is the elimination of a state program that has been in place since 1985. This program provided remedial services in reading and math to first and second graders. The original rationale for cutting this program was that the extended school services and nongraded primary programs would eliminate the need for the remediation program. In light of the reduced extended school services budget, however, this rationale is now being questioned by some district and state education officials.

Local Implementation of the SEEK Formula

As shown in Tables 1-3, pages 7-8, the KERA finance measures affected the four study districts in different ways, depending upon local economic circumstances. These tables can be used as a reference for the profiles of the four districts included with this issue. Figures given in both the tables and the case studies are approximate to protect the anonymity of the districts.

We focus primarily on funding changes between the 1989-90 school year (pre-KERA) and the 1990-91 year (first year of KERA). Where appropriate, however, we also share information from the current school year (1991-92).

Discussion

The SEEK Formula at its Best: Orange County and Vanderbilt County

The experiences of the four study districts provide an example of the varying effects KERA's finance measures can have on school districts. *Orange County* and *Vanderbilt County*

District Profile—Lamont County

Supplement to NOTES FROM THE FIELD—Volume 2, Number 1

A School District's Financial Picture—After KERA

Funding increase. Table 2, page 7, illustrates that the Lamont County school district received the smallest increase in state funding of the four districts studied. Several reasons for this can be cited:

- The district's property wealth is the highest among the four districts, which means that local taxes provide a greater percentage of the guaranteed base and of Tier I funding than in our other three study districts;
- Lamont County has fewer students classified as at-risk, resulting in a smaller add-on to the guaranteed base; and
- The local tax effort barely placed Lamont County in the Tier I funding level, resulting in a smaller sum of state equalizing funds.

Lamont County did receive a large percentage increase in local funding (40 percent), but the actual dollar increase is relatively small when compared to the money that comes in from the state. Lamont County received about 17 percent of its revenue from local sources in 1990-91, compared to 75 percent from the state. When state and local funding increases are combined, Lamont County experienced a 15 percent increase, one of the smallest in our study.

Outside the SEEK formula, the Lamont County school district received a $55,000 grant for the 1990-91 school year to offer an extended school services program for students who need extra time acquiring skills. The grant was increased to nearly $130,000 in 1991-92, but that amount has since been cut to about $80,000. The district received about $35,000 in 1990-91 and $60,000 in 1991-92 to offer a preschool program to all four year olds in the county classified as "at-risk" (eligible for free and reduced lunch). In addition, the district received about $1,500 for professional development planning in the 1990-91 school year, and about $9,000 for staff development in 1991-92.

Expenditure of new money. Table 3, page 8, illustrates how current operating expenses changed in Lamont County after the passage of KERA. The bulk of new school funding in Lamont County went to salary increases, which averaged about 10 percent in all job classifications. (Salaries are included in all categories listed in Table 3 except Fixed Charges). What appears to be a disproportionately large increase in administrative expenditures is attributed to a teacher dismissal case that occurred in the district during the 1990-91 school year. The appeal resulted in high litigation costs for the district.

Since the passage of KERA, school districts are required to allocate a **minimum** of $75 per pupil for instructional expenses. At the elementary level, these funds have been used to purchase such items as microscopes, dictionaries, reading workbooks, reading material for lower-functioning students, and encyclopedias. In addition, some of this new money may be used to send primary teachers to training sessions on the nongraded primary program.

At the high school, the school council appointed a finance committee to determine how the instructional allocation would be spent. After numerous meetings, intensive research, and teacher surveys, a budget was approved that provided funds to all departments. In addition, an enrichment fund was established that can be accessed by teachers for special programs. The fund has been used to support an artist-in-residence, a science olympiad, and an Earth Day program.

Extended school services funding is being used to offer an after-school tutoring program at all schools for one hour, two days per week, and to provide transportation to and from the program. In addition, an extended school services program was offered during the summer of 1991 for middle and high school students. For the 1991-92 school year, the district plans to expand the program by offering it two Saturdays per month at all schools, and by including sixth-grade students. Budget cutbacks, however, may alter the plan.

Preschool funding enables the district to serve all at-risk four year olds who wish to participate. The program operates at two elementary schools, serves 23 students, and is contracted to the area Head Start.

This profile is a supplement to NOTES FROM THE FIELD, part of a qualitative study of education reform in rural Kentucky being conducted by Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) to provide feedback to educators and policymakers on the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990. Two researchers are documenting reform efforts in four rural Kentucky districts that have been assigned the pseudonyms of: Lamont County, Newtown Independent, Orange County, and Vanderbilt County. For more information, contact either researcher—Pam Coe (800/624-9120) or Patty Kannapel (502/581-0324); State Policy Program, AEL, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325.

The 1990-91 professional development planning grant was used to form a professional development committee composed of representatives from all schools. Substitutes enabled these teachers to hold planning meetings during the school day, and the committee planned the district's inservice activities for the 1991-92 school year. This year's staff development grant is being used primarily to pay presenters to offer workshops within the district; some is being used to send teachers for training.

Lamont County is participating in the state school construction program, enabling the district to move forward with a facility plan that calls for constructing a middle school and renovating two elementary schools.

Adequacy of education funding. In spite of KERA increases, funding from the reform law has not affected Lamont County to the same degree as the other three districts. The explanation for this is two-pronged. First, the school board increased the local tax rate just beyond the minimum required, which means the district is not receiving as much state or local money as it could, if the board had moved further into Tier I funding.

Lamont County school board members say they were reluctant to raise the tax rate any higher because the local economy centers around agriculture and is nearly devoid of industry. Because the district relies heavily on property taxes for local revenue, farmers would bear the burden of a local tax increase. Many board members believe that increasing taxes dramatically would create a real economic hardship for farmers. In addition, the board has not yet explored the possibility of spreading the tax burden by levying an occupational or excise tax. (The board has imposed the motor vehicle tax and utility tax.)

The second element of Lamont County's financial dilemma is also closely tied to the agricultural economy. The rich farmland of Lamont County is valued relatively high, yet few farmers are wealthy. In the eyes of the state, however, "wealth for the purposes of funding education is defined as property wealth" (Office of Education Accountability 1991, p. 16). This means that Lamont County looks relatively wealthy on paper, and the state expects the local district to provide a larger share of education funding than districts with lower property values. In addition, a relatively small percentage of Lamont County students are classified as at risk, which means the district receives a smaller add-on than districts where real poverty exists.

As a result of these factors, Lamont County—which was one of the 66 school districts that participated in the lawsuit that resulted in KERA's passage—is still struggling with financial problems.

Local attitudes toward KERA funding. In the first year of KERA, residents reported that the only financial effects of KERA they felt were salary increases. The recent $75 per pupil instructional allocation has changed this perception somewhat. In addition, respondents concede that funding for categorical programs such as the extended school services and preschool programs added needed services to the district. The extended school services program, in particular, is universally cited by Lamont County respondents as a positive outcome of KERA.

Even so, attitudes toward KERA funding in Lamont County are not generally positive. Administrators say that KERA's passage has not brought significant amounts of new money for such things as more staff or sufficient professional development opportunities needed to prepare for KERA implementation. The perception that the SEEK formula did not benefit the district is widely shared by Lamont County school employees, as well as by many citizens of the county. Most people believe the funding formula does not adequately address the economic circumstances of their agricultural community. A school board member expressed his frustration with the SEEK formula and the lack of benefits for Lamont County:

> They expect us, the local districts, to come up with the money, and we're doing the best we can. Here in Lamont County we doubled the property tax rate last year. And I thought it was a big step. We only went into Tier I very minimally...and yet we doubled the property tax rates.... We almost caught up with [a neighboring] County when we doubled the property tax rate here, yet we didn't get the increase in revenue.... The money that's received from the state—what additional monies we get—practically all of it will be taken up in salaries.... You would think in our county if you doubled the property tax rates, you could offer a whole lot more programs, and we can't. We're still short guidance counselors... we need buses... it would cost $300,000 for air conditioning, just to install it.... And we're losing students.... The coal mines have shut down, and one of our biggest employers shut its doors.

Board members are not alone in this view. A local attorney involved in the county's economic development foundation explained local resistance to taxes:

> It [property tax] falls on a small segment of the population—the agricultural segment. The farmers are being asked to foot the bill. I am strongly opposed to property tax. In an agricultural community, it doesn't reflect, in my mind, ability to pay....Ten years ago, farmland in this county (decent farmland) was selling for $2,000 an acre. And yet, if you made an average of $90 to $100-acre return, you were doing well. You're talking a four or five percent return on your investment, which is a disaster for most businesses. So I think in an agricultural community, property tax is unfair... This year you're going to find very few, if any, farmers in Lamont County in the black, and yet that property tax still goes on.

District Profile—Newtown Independent

Supplement to NOTES FROM THE FIELD—Volume 2, Number 1

A School District's Financial Picture—After KERA

Funding increase. Newtown experienced a substantial increase in state funding, although it did not feel the benefits of these increases to the extent that Orange and Vanderbilt counties did. Table 2, page 7, shows that state funding increased under KERA while local funding decreased, resulting in a total increase of 10 percent, the smallest of the four districts. Reasons for this are:

- Newtown received a 20 percent increase in state funding because of its local tax effort, which placed it in Tier II in 1990-1991. This meant the district received the maximum Tier I state equalizing funds.
- The 1990-91 tax rate was in place prior to passage of KERA, so local tax revenue could not increase substantially.
- Some local tax bills were distributed so late that many local companies paid their taxes after the tax books had been closed for the year. (Thus, these tax monies will benefit the Newtown schools in 1991-92.)

Outside the SEEK formula, the Newtown Independent school district received a $25,000 grant for the 1990-91 school year to offer an extended school services program. This grant was increased to $55,000 in 1991-92 but has since been decreased to $32,000. The school district does not offer a KERA-funded preschool; the area Head Start already serves all eligible four year olds in Newtown. The district received about $1,500 for professional development planning in the 1990-91 school year, and about $4,500 for staff development in 1991-92.

Expenditure of new money. In Newtown Independent, as in Lamont County, most of the new money received for the 1990-91 school year was spent on personnel costs. KERA required a 10 percent increase in the minimum state salary schedule for teachers, and most districts gave teachers at least a 10 percent raise, even if they were above the minimum state salary schedule. In fact, the Newtown board of education chose to provide a 10 percent increase to all teachers and all classified staff. Because the Newtown salary schedule was already higher than the state minimum and because the district has a relatively low pupil-teacher ratio, a larger percentage of new state money went to salaries in Newtown Independent than in the other three districts. The total amount of funds spent on salaries across the board in Newtown was 17 percent higher than the amount in 1989-90; total receipts from the state were only about $30,000 more than the increase in salaries. Because of the sharp decrease in local tax receipts, the increase in total salaries was a little more than the total increase in revenue for the school district.

Included in the salary figures are several new staff, including an elementary counselor and a number of instructional aides. The district has not made new investments in instructional materials or books. New professional development expenditures do not exceed the $1,500 and $4,500 allocations discussed above, which are spent through the local training consortium. The district has, for some years, spent approximately $100 per pupil on instructional supplies, which is ample to meet KERA's guidelines.

The extended school services grant—the only categorical grant Newtown has received—provides after-school tutoring for eligible students and summer school at the high school level. Newtown Independent participates in the school construction fund and is planning to build an addition to the high school.

As Table 3, page 8, shows, the district's plant maintenance expenses increased substantially in 1990-91. One "large-ticket" item, the installation of a new elevator shaft, accounts for most of this increase. A combination of insurance and local funds was used.

The superintendent pointed out that a small district is not as free to budget increases as a larger one. According to the superintendent, total receipts, from a variety of sources, can vary by as much as $200,000 per year. While this might not be a significant hardship to a larger district, it poses severe problems for a district serving only about 900 students, whose total budget in 1990-91 was somewhat less than $4 million. He pointed out that he must budget "on the low side" to be safe, so that some

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expenditures must be postponed until the middle or end of the school year, when funds are actually on hand.

Adequacy of education funding. The Newtown school district is considerably better off than the Lamont district because of the local financial support of education. Its current funding level allows it to continue to provide the services it has traditionally provided, which are more extensive than those traditionally provided by nearby county districts. The district offered elementary art and music, for instance, at a time when none of the surrounding county districts were able to do so, and it has historically paid its teachers more than any of the surrounding districts. Since the surrounding districts have all raised teachers' salaries more than Newtown did, salaries are now roughly comparable with nearby districts.

Crowded schools has been something of a problem in recent years, created by an influx of tuition-paying students from other districts; the district plans to cut the number of tuition students it will accept. The high school addition should meet most current needs for additional space.

Although KERA features that can be implemented without major additional expenditures have not caused the district problems, it has experienced some difficulty in implementing those features requiring major changes in the way instruction is delivered. The program most affected—the new nongraded primary program—must be implemented by the fall of 1992. The district has so few primary level teachers that they can work as a committee of the whole in preparing to implement the program. However, the primary teachers have not received any additional funds to purchase materials to implement a radically different instructional program. Because Newtown still has greater per-pupil revenue than the other three districts, this may reflect mostly a need to re-prioritize funding allocations to meet KERA demands.

Local attitudes toward KERA funding. According to the Newtown superintendent:

> The law itself is not designed to help districts such as ours that have been helping themselves for years.... Our people tax themselves considerably to have quality education, and we don't get nearly as much money per pupil [increase] because of our local wealth and local taxation as compared to other districts. The entire reform act is not geared to help small, independent districts.

As this quotation indicates, it is a widespread feeling in the district that the KERA funding formula is not designed to help a small district like Newtown Independent. District staff and parents are bitter about what they perceive as inadequate state funding. They perceive the KERA finance measures as penalizing the district for having funded schools at high levels for many years. As Table 1 shows, property wealth in Newtown is below the state average, although it is a little above the state median. The superintendent explained that, ever since the Kentucky legislature passed a bill limiting increases in local taxation for education purposes to four percent per year, the local district has voted to increase the permitted four percent each year. The local community, which the superintendent describes as predominantly "working class," has been willing to support the schools in this way, leading to a tax rate that rivals those of some of the wealthiest districts in the state.

As the superintendent put it, the "good things that KERA has done for us" are not monetary. Rather, the district's exposure to new education techniques has excited teachers and "a lot of the parents." However, there appears already to be some burnout among Newtown teachers, in response to the enormous demands on their time as a result of the changes KERA has brought about. In such a small district, everyone must be involved in change, not just those who are most enthusiastic about it. One member of the local affiliate of the Kentucky Education Association complained that the local teachers did not pressure the school board for more than a 10 percent raise "because we knew the money just wasn't there," but now Newtown teachers are having to work as hard or harder than teachers who received much larger raises in other districts. A primary teacher expressed great trepidation about having to implement the new primary program this coming September without sufficient training and without the opportunity to buy supplies and equipment she feels are necessary for a totally different kind of primary program.

Behind the attitudes toward KERA funding are fears expressed by several district staff that the new funding formula may make it impossible for a small, independent district like Newtown to survive. Residents feel tremendous local pride in and loyalty to the school system, so any threat to its well-being is resisted.

District Profile—Orange County

Supplement to NOTES FROM THE FIELD—Volume 2, Number 1

A School District's Financial Picture—After KERA

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Funding increase. Orange County received the largest increase in state funding of the four districts in our study (see Table 2, page 7). The district received the full 25 percent increase in state funding allowed by KERA and would have received more, if the 25 percent limit had not been in place. Why?

- Orange County has very low property wealth, which means that the state provides about 90 percent of the SEEK-guaranteed adjusted base.
- About two-thirds of the district's students are classified as at risk, resulting in a large add-on for at-risk students.
- The district increased its local tax rate substantially and, as a result, qualified for a large amount of state equalizing funds under the Tier I program, although the new tax rate is about four percent less than the maximum allowed under Tier I. Because of Orange County's low property wealth, the state provides a larger percentage of the Tier I funding than in any other district in the study.

In 1990-91, the Orange County school board levied an additional five cent property tax and a three percent utility tax. This was the first time the district had imposed a utility tax; the board supported it primarily so the property increase could be limited to five cents. The tax was not raised again in 1991-92. The local tax increase did not produce as large an increase in local funding, however, as was experienced in Lamont and Vanderbilt counties because property wealth in Orange County is much lower.

Outside the SEEK formula, the Orange County school district received a $148,000 grant for the 1990-91 school year to offer an extended school services program. This grant was increased to $333,000 in 1991-92 but has since been decreased to $270,000.

Lacking space for an additional preschool program, the district did not receive funds in 1990-91 to offer a KERA preschool program. In 1991-92, it received about $60,000 for a preschool program for 21 children. In addition, the district received about $4,000 for professional development planning in the 1990-91 school year and about $20,000 for staff development in 1991-92.

Orange County is the only district in our study to receive special funding for family resource and youth services centers. For the 1991-92 fiscal year, the district has received approximately $165,000 from the state Cabinet for Human Resources to operate two family resource centers and one youth services center. The district submitted grant applications for centers at all schools last year and plans to do the same this spring.

Expenditure of new money. About 70 percent of the new money went into salaries (including new staff, since the district was able to add a number of additional teachers as well as raise existing teacher salaries by approximately 14 percent). Three or four teachers were added to the high school faculty, and each elementary school moved from a half-day to a full-day kindergarten, doubling the number of kindergarten teachers. In addition, the district added more counselors and school nurses. As Table 3, page 8, shows, health program expenditures increased substantially (160%) in 1990-91. Previously, the district had contracted for just enough nursing time to meet the needs of a few students who could not attend school without nursing care. In 1991-92, the nursing staff increased, partly through the family resource and youth services centers and partly through general funds being devoted to nurses' salaries. Pupil transportation costs, conversely, went up less than in the other three districts, primarily attributed to the move from half-day to full-day kindergarten.

Even after these expenditures, a great deal of money was left for new instructional supplies, library books, instructional equipment such as computers, and especially for professional development, over and above the money designated by the state for staff development. The amount of money allocated to instructional supplies and materials escalated sharply after

the 1990-91 school year. Because there was more money available for such materials, the board of education abolished all school fees and prohibited all school-level fundraising. Prior to the passage of KERA, the board made every effort to match funds raised at the school level through fairs and door-to-door sales, to enable the schools to purchase expensive instructional materials.

The Orange County extended school services program provides after-school tutoring and summer school programs, but transportation is not provided. Because extended school services funding was cut sharply in mid-year, Orange County schools will be severely limited in the programs they will be able to offer students in need of additional instruction for the balance of the school year. Staff of the individual schools will decide whether to cut planned summer school, to eliminate after-school tutoring, or to cut back on both. Only one school is unaffected by the cut in extended school services funding; it is not conducting summer school—a major construction project is underway at the school site.

Although the Orange County district has the largest enrollment of the four districts, the KERA preschool program serves only 21 children. The area Head Start program already serves most of the eligible children.

The two family resource centers and one youth services center in Orange County were described in detail in the last issue of "Notes From the Field." Enthusiasm is high for the centers, and evidence is that the centers have already helped numerous students overcome barriers to learning that emanate from outside the school. In addition, the centers have saved teachers a good deal of instructional time and have sparked greater community involvement with the schools in the form of donated monies and services from area businesses, health care providers, and social service agencies.

Orange County administrators estimate that the district is spending approximately $85,000 per year to meet the professional development demands of KERA. During the current year, approximately $20,000 of this amount came from the state and was accessed through the professional development consortium. The balance came from general funds. Funds accessed through the consortium have been used to pay a consultant who has been assisting the primary committees in the district to plan the new primary program and to compensate the teachers for participation in professional development sessions.

Orange County participates in the school construction fund, and its bonding capacity has increased substantially as a result of the influx of new state and local funds. One of the elementary schools is currently being converted to a state-of-the-art middle school. The district plans to begin building a new elementary school next year to house students from two schools—the school being renovated to a middle school and a small, isolated elementary. However, district staff are fearful that allocations to the construction fund may be severely cut in the current state budget shortfall, which would put these plans on hold.

Adequacy of education funding. In an interview with AEL staff, the Orange County superintendent said (only half jokingly) that the county's increase in funding means that, instead of worrying about how to make ends meet, he now is worrying about how to spend the money **productively**.

Orange County has been able to raise teacher salaries to levels comparable with nearby independent districts; has been able to hire a considerable number of new staff; has invested in a great deal of instructional hardware, including computer laboratories for each of the elementary schools; and has greatly increased the amount of money available to each school for instructional supplies. One can almost hear a collective sigh of relief as district staff are able to expand their efforts in ways that were impossible before KERA.

Even without these advantages, district test scores rose dramatically in 1989-90, and the district superintendent was grateful that KERA allowed the district to give teachers their first significant raise at a time when the raise could be interpreted as a reward for a job well done. Since KERA, district staff have documented some of the direct effects on children of the new funding. For example, central office staff reported that students tutored through the extended school services program improved both their grades and their test scores in 1990-91.

Local attitudes toward KERA funding. As would be expected, district respondents have only positive things to say about the KERA funding formula. Community attitudes toward the schools have traditionally been skeptical, but some of the new programs have begun to bring about changes in parental attitudes, even this early in the implementation process. For instance, a few parents have been so impressed by the effect of some of the new instructional equipment (especially a Writing to Read program for primary children) that they have become vocal advocates of the school district.

District staff have expressed anxieties, however, about recent cutbacks in the amount of state funding they had been expecting for the 1992-93 school year. The extended school services program was cut—and the staff have calculated a number of cuts they expect to receive. Altogether, the district expects to lose approximately $1 million that had been expected for the extended school services program, remediation (first- and second-grade level), textbook funds, salary support, and mandated carryover. In addition, staff have been told not to expect salary increases in 1992-93, except as required for increases in rank and experience; the required $100,000 will have to come out of local revenues.

District Profile—Vanderbilt County

Supplement to NOTES FROM THE FIELD—Volume 2, Number 1

A School District's Financial Picture—After KERA

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Funding increase. Vanderbilt County, like Orange County, experienced a substantial increase in state funding. This is because:

- Nearly half of the district's students are classified as at-risk, which results in a large add-on to the base SEEK guarantee.
- The district received the largest add-on for special education of the four study districts. A parochial school operates in the district and serves few (if any) at-risk students.
- The district increased its local tax rate substantially, resulting in significant state equalizing funds through the Tier I program.

Like other districts in the state, Vanderbilt County received state grants to operate an extended school services program, a preschool program, and to plan for and offer staff development. The extended school services grant for 1990-91 was about $65,000; this amount increased to about $145,000 in 1991-92, but was cut back $80,000. The district received about $35,000 for the preschool program the first year to serve 15 students, and about $110,000 the second year for 36 students. Staff development funds totaled about $1,500 in 1990-91 and about $8,000 this year.

Expenditure of new money. The bulk of the new money not spent on personnel costs went to instruction in one form or another. A close analysis of the district's budget reveals that expenditures for library/audiovisual materials increased by 244 percent, while other instructional expenses such as teaching supplies, books, and instructional travel increased by 70 percent. New money was also used to increase salaries, to hire additional staff, to increase the instructional allotment to all schools, to eliminate student fees, to eliminate textbook rental at the high school, and to supplement the vocational program.

A 34 percent increase in pupil transportation costs (see Table 3, page 8) went to the purchase of three new buses, additional drivers' salaries for the extended school services program, and increases in gas and oil prices. The bulk of a 49 percent increase in plant maintenance costs can be attributed to the replacement of instructional equipment at the schools—an expense that came from the instructional allotment to each school.

Perhaps the most impressive financial investment by the district partially attributable to increased KERA funding (combined with past savings) occurred this school year: the Vanderbilt County school board invested nearly $800,000 in computers and computer training. Every classroom in the district was equipped with at least five computers, and teachers are in the process of receiving training on various programs for classroom use.

The district provided a larger per-pupil instructional allotment to each school than the state requires: $75 (elementary) and $100 (high school) for the 1990-91 school year, and $200/$250 in 1991-92. This allocation enabled all schools in the district to meet nearly all the instructional needs identified by teachers. In addition, all schools in the district implementing school-based decisionmaking received a small amount of funding to use for school council expenses, such as hiring a secretary. One elementary principal, when asked how KERA had affected his school, immediately mentioned increased funding.

> We did get more money to operate on this year, and we started some new programs. We started the SUCCESS Reading program in the primary grades and Box It and Bag It Math—there's been a lot of expense to those. [The new money is] all going to instructional supplies.

Another principal, when asked the same question, provided further examples of how increased funding will directly affect students:

> Well, right off the bat, it increased our funding.... Each teacher has been able to order considerably more supplemental materials.... For example, we had three that ordered SRA kits to go along with their regular classroom activities....

> Computers, that's another big area.... We have 21 computers coming in, which is great.

Still another elementary principal provided a long list of instructional supplies that have been ordered, including overhead projectors and related supplies for each teacher, four sets of literature books for each teacher, upgrading of the school's professional library, calculators, Kentucky history books, and portfolio materials.

The high school principal provided a long list of supplies and equipment purchased with the instructional allotment, including software; books, thesauruses, and dictionaries; science equipment; band instruments; a multimedia camera; and 10 VCR's.

The county used its 1990-91 extended school services grant to offer an after-school tutoring program at all schools for one hour, two days a week (transportation provided) and a social studies summer course at the high school (no transportation). With the increased extended school services grant for 1991-92, district administrators initially intended to expand the summer program to serve elementary and high school students, but recent budget cutbacks have forced the district to eliminate the summer program altogether. In addition, the after-school program may be cut back to one day per week next year.

Preschool funding supports programming at three of the district's elementary schools. The program is open to all four year olds, as well as to all handicapped three and four year olds. The district runs the program but works closely with the area Head Start.

Vanderbilt County used professional development funds from the state to offer varied and ongoing staff development activities designed to prepare teachers for the implementation of KERA. Before school started, a five-day training institute offered teachers a choice of numerous workshops. All primary-level teachers in the district have received more than a week of training in various instructional strategies compatible with the nongraded primary program, and nearly all will be sent to observe nongraded programs in action. Because four schools in the district voted to implement school-based decisionmaking, the district invested substantial funds to prepare for implementation. A consultant was hired last year to assist a committee of principals and teachers in developing an implementation manual, and the same consultant conducted a three-day planning and training retreat with school council members at the four schools.

Vanderbilt County plans to use school construction funds to build a new high school and a new elementary school and to convert the present high school to a middle school.

Adequacy of education funding. Through a combination of sound fiscal management and the school board's willingness to increase local taxes high enough to move into Tier I funding, the district has enjoyed at least two years of improved education funding. Although few school officials will admit that funding is adequate to do everything they would like, the Vanderbilt County superintendent conceded that since the passage of KERA, the district has been able to fund nearly all programs and activities deemed necessary to meet the needs of its students.

Visits to Vanderbilt County and conversations with teachers and administrators make it obvious that funding under KERA has been a boon to the district. New staff, materials, and equipment have been added, and staff are receiving extensive training in preparation for implementation of the nongraded primary, the new assessment program, the use of computers in the classroom, and other instructional practices. Principals throughout the county report that the large instructional allotment received this year will allow them to satisfy completely their own "wish lists" as well as allow teachers to purchase all but the most expensive materials.

One principal commented:

> Everything they've [teachers] requested, everything under the sun is going to be purchased.... There is not a reason for any teacher in a classroom not to have everything they've requested.

Another principal echoed this sentiment, commenting, "All they have to do is ask."

Local attitudes toward KERA funding. Local attitudes toward the SEEK formula in Vanderbilt County have been almost entirely positive, although respondents are concerned that the state's budget shortfall may bring an end to their progress. When asked if KERA had represented a financial windfall for Vanderbilt County, the superintendent said:

> No doubt about it. We've been able to do things for kids.... We've eliminated instructional fees, we've spent $300,000-$400,000 on instruction that we never had before—you know, more teachers. We've just been able to do a lot of things. The board has made an $800,000 commitment to put computers—we've got four or five computers in every classroom.... We wouldn't have [been able to do these things without KERA], no way!

Principals and teachers alike report increased funding from KERA as one of the major benefits of the reform law. Their positive reaction may explain why overall reaction to KERA is relatively positive throughout the district.

serve as examples of the SEEK formula working in precisely the way it was designed to work. Both districts have significant numbers of at-risk students in their populations, and Orange County is especially economically depressed. Both districts took advantage of the Tier I program and raised local tax rates to relatively high levels. As a result, both districts received additional funding from state and local sources and spent these funds on numerous activities designed to ultimately improve student performance.

SEEK and High Tax-Effort Districts: The Newtown Dilemma

Newtown Independent has enjoyed fewer financial benefits from KERA. Newtown is not a wealthy district: almost half of all Kentucky districts have higher per pupil property wealth. It is a high tax-effort district, as are most of Kentucky's property-rich districts. A substantial local tax effort was in place prior to KERA. Respondents' perceptions that the SEEK formula has penalized the district for "doing well" appear to be largely related to the loss of the competitive advantage the district enjoyed prior to KERA's passage. The local tax effort and higher tax base enabled the district to employ more teachers, pay higher salaries, and offer more programs than surrounding county districts prior to KERA. Student performance on standardized tests has been high, and parent participation in the schools has added to the district's reputation as one of the best in the region.

After the passage of KERA, surrounding county districts received a larger influx of money than Newtown Independent. They were able to increase and improve their programs, services, and staff to a level nearly comparable to Newtown. Even though this did not result in any reduction of programs, services, or staff for the Newtown district, many respondents resented the fact that the district had essentially remained the same after the passage of KERA, while other districts had been able to improve dramatically. The resentment toward the SEEK formula expressed in Newtown Independent may reflect a typical response of high tax effort or wealthy districts to the funding formula. The district's response to KERA funding may change when Tier I is fully funded in the next biennium. Districts like Newtown (with high tax effort but relatively low property wealth) will receive substantial funding increases, but districts with the highest property wealth in the state will not benefit.

SEEK and Agriculture: A Comparison of Lamont and Vanderbilt Counties

The effects of the SEEK formula on *Lamont County* present a more interesting and complex study of the funding formula. From a facilities and personnel perspective, this district is in greater need than any of the other study districts, yet the SEEK formula has not been the panacea that district staff had hoped it would be.

Two conflicting explanations have been offered for Lamont County's relative lack of financial benefits from the SEEK formula. Most Lamont County respondents believe that the lack of industry and the low incomes associated with the farm economy in Lamont County result in pressure to keep tax rates low. Under the SEEK formula, however, Lamont County appears to be wealthier than it is, due to the high assessment on farmland and the low numbers of students who qualify for free or reduced meals. These factors resulted in a relatively small increase in funding for the district under KERA, because the formula presumes that Lamont County is capable of making a greater local tax effort.

Most state-level officials, however, believe that Lamont County residents are unwilling to pay higher local taxes for better schools as a result of a longstanding tradition of tax resistance. One official commented:

> Why does Lamont County not have anything? Because they've never levied the taxes.... Look at their assessed valuation per child. What level of taxation are they levying? Thirty-eight cents, which means probably six cents [sic] of their equivalency goes for building, which would mean they'd only be into Tier I two cents. So they have not made the effort. When they make the effort, the money will be there.

The true explanation for Lamont County's dilemma probably lies somewhere between the two. A comparison of Lamont County and Vanderbilt County illuminates the situation a bit better because the two districts share many characteristics, yet Vanderbilt County has benefitted fully from the SEEK formula while Lamont County has not.

In both Lamont County and Vanderbilt County, agriculture, followed by the school district, is the largest single source of employment. The vast majority of land area in both counties is classified as farmland, and neither county has much industry. Population figures in the two counties differ by less than 1,000, the two districts contain the same number of schools, and the average daily attendance is nearly equal. Assessed property value per pupil is also quite similar. These statistics suggest that Lamont County should be able to take advantage of the SEEK formula to the same degree as Vanderbilt County.

Some differences exist, however, that may partially explain why this has not occurred. A higher proportion of Lamont County farmers are full-time farmers (58 percent in Lamont, 49 percent in Vanderbilt), suggesting that a higher proportion of Lamont County farmers rely on farming as their sole source of income. In fact, 1980 census figures (the latest available) reveal that, while average income from farm self-employment was higher in Lamont

than Vanderbilt, average total income for farm households was higher in Vanderbilt. Also, average farm size is considerably larger in Lamont County (Lamont - 235 acres; Vanderbilt - 143 acres), which suggests that property tax increases have a bigger impact on Lamont County farmers than on those in Vanderbilt County.

Another contributing factor to the difference in attitude toward taxes may be the geography of the two areas. Vanderbilt County is located within an hour's drive of two of the state's largest cities and contains some historical and natural sites that attract a modest tourist trade. Lamont County, by contrast, is more isolated and culturally traditional. No four-lane highways, motels, fast-food chains, or shopping centers can be found in the county. A 1991 state survey on tourism reveals that Lamont County ranks last in the amount of tourism dollars expended (Kentucky Department of Travel Development). Not only are few dollars brought into the community, but relatively little outside influence is exerted on longstanding traditions, such as tax resistance.

One possible option for districts like Lamont County is to rely less on the property tax and more on the other taxes available to local boards, so the tax burden is more equally distributed among the citizens. A number of taxes can be imposed by school boards in their efforts to come up with the local share of school funding. In addition to property taxes, boards can levy motor vehicle, occupational, and utility taxes or place an excise tax on income. In Vanderbilt County, for example, the school board increased the motor vehicle tax to the maximum allowed, while keeping the property tax at a much lower rate. Orange County, on the other hand, imposed a utility tax (already in place in both Lamont and Vanderbilt counties) in lieu of increasing the property tax substantially. Many school districts avoid imposing utility, occupational, and excise taxes, however, because these taxes are subject to recall under certain conditions—a predetermined percentage of voters petition for it following a public hearing on the matter. Before KERA, these taxes were *automatically* placed on the ballot; many school boards may not realize that this is no longer the case.

It is also possible that, given time and full funding from the state, the SEEK formula may eventually begin to work for Lamont County. The school board's practice of increasing local taxes a little each year should eventually bring district finances up to the level necessary to effectively implement KERA, provided that the state fully funds the Tier I formula. However, the state must continue funding other aspects of KERA at or above current levels for this to occur.

Conclusion

Our analysis of school finance in these four rural districts reveals that education funding increased substantially in all districts since the passage of KERA, and that most of this new funding went to salary increases, instructional and library supplies, and programs to help at-risk students. Although it is not possible to study the equalization effects of KERA with such a small sample, per pupil revenue appeared to become more equal among *three* of our four districts: Newtown Independent, Orange County, and Vanderbilt County.

The Lamont County situation is perplexing and may represent a set of circumstances unique in the state. Clearly, the SEEK formula has not yet brought district finances up to the level of the other districts in our study. A bit of irony is noted as well: this district joined the original lawsuit because of its strong need for increased funding. It is possible that the SEEK formula will eventually meet Lamont County's needs, but this can only happen if the local board continues to increase local taxes, and if the state stands behind its commitment to fully fund education reform.

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Tables 1-3 graphically profile AEL's four study districts and their response to KERA's finance measures. As might be expected, the districts responded to KERA funding in different ways. These tables help the reader understand KERA's financial effects on the districts.

Table 1

School District Statistics

	Assessed property value per pupil	Equivalent tax rate			Percent of at-risk students
	90-91	89-90	90-91	91-92	89-90
Lamont County	$ 141,000	26	38	42	29%
Newtown Indep.	$ 139,000	68	68	68	30%
Orange County	$ 62,000	35	47	49	65%
Vanderbilt Co	$ 139,000	26	44	47	46%
State Average	$ 170,000	50	57	*	39%

* Not available

(Source: Kentucky Department of Education, personal contact, Nov. 1991)

Table 2

Funding Increases for 1990-91 School Year

	Per pupil revenue (federal, state, local)		State funds	Local funds	State and Local
	89-90	90-91			
Lamont County	$3,300	$3,700	10%	40%	15%
Newtown Indep.	$3,900	$4,400	20%	-15%[2]	10%
Orange County	$3,300	$4,100	25%	15%	30%
Vanderbilt Co.	$3,400	$4,100	20%	60%	30%
State Average	$3,800	$4,600	16%	21%	21%

[2]Due to late collection of taxes

(Sources: Office of Education Accountability, 1991; Kentucky Department of Education, personal contact, Nov. 1991.)

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Table 3

Changes in Current Operating Expenses by Budget Category from 1989-90 to 1990-91

	Lamont	Newtown	Orange	Vanderbilt
Administration	+ 31%[3]	+ 8%	+ 4%	+ 10%
Instruction	+ 13%	+ 17%	+ 24%	+ 20%
Attendance Services	+ 12%	+ 10%	- 12%	+ 15%
Health Services	+ 28%	NA	+160%	+ 5%
Pupil Transportation	+ 21%	+ 68%	+ 9%	+ 34%
Plant Operation	+ 2%	+ 2%	+ 5%	+ 7%
Plant Maintenance	+ 6%	+124%	- 1%	+ 49%
Fixed Charges (Social security, retirement, insurance)	+ 20%	+ 16%	+ 26%	+ 22%

[3]Reflects cost of litigation

(Source: School district budgets)

AEL is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

This publication was produced in whole or in part with funds from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U. S. Department of Education, under contract number RP91002002. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U. S. government.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD:
Education Reform in Rural Kentucky

Volume 2, Number 2 September 1992

AEL

Special Feature: KERA Through the Eyes of Teachers

Major Findings

This issue of "Notes from the Field" shares the findings of teacher focus group discussions in each of the four school districts participating in this study. These discussions yield the following generalizations about current teacher views on KERA:

- Teachers are excited about the new instructional strategies and increased teacher professionalism associated with KERA.
- Teachers are overwhelmed by their increased workload as they attempt to implement the law.
- Teachers are frustrated by inconsistent training and information on portfolio assessment; reactions to the interim assessment program are extremely mixed.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about increased professional development opportunities since the passage of KERA.
- Enthusiasm for the nongraded primary program is high, but teachers believe they are being asked to implement the program too quickly.
- School-based decisionmaking (SBDM) is viewed as positive by teachers involved in its implementation, but teachers see a need for greater parent and teacher involvement in SBDM.
- The extended school services program for students who need extra time to acquire skills is viewed as a positive outcome of KERA, but teachers fear funding cuts and increased guidelines will cripple the program.
- Family resource and youth services centers are also viewed as positive, but some teachers are uncomfortable with the increased responsibility schools are being asked to assume over students' lives.
- Although the instructional funds allocated to schools are seen as extremely helpful in implementing KERA, teachers in two districts complain that the overall funding level is inadequate.
- Reorganization of the state department of education has created problems for local educators in obtaining information and assistance.
- The school principal is pivotal in the successful implementation of KERA.

Suggestions for the Legislature

When asked what suggestions they would offer the legislature about KERA, teachers in all groups offered four suggestions:

- slow implementation of the assessment and primary programs so teachers will have time to make the new programs work;
- compensate teachers for the increased workload associated with KERA by increasing planning and training time during the regular school day or by paying for overtime;
- stick with KERA long enough to let it work; and
- fully fund KERA.

This synthesis of findings is part of a qualitative study of education reform in rural Kentucky being conducted by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) to provide feedback to educators and policymakers on the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990. Two researchers are documenting reform efforts in four rural Kentucky districts that have been assigned the pseudonyms of: Lamont County, Newtown Independent, Orange County, and Vanderbilt County. For more information about this project contact either researcher—Pam Coe (800/624-9120) or Patty Kannapel (502/581-0324), State Policy program, AEL, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325.

Methodology

Discussion questions

Meetings were conducted in the late spring of 1992. Four open-ended questions guided our discussions. We asked teachers to identify: (1) benefits and drawbacks of KERA; (2) facilitators of and barriers to reform implementation; (3) professional and personal life changes brought on by KERA; and (4) suggestions for improving KERA. Discussions lasted from one and one-half to two hours. The summary of teachers' responses is arranged by the major findings cited above; the questions were so closely related that responses overlapped.

Participants

In most cases, two teachers from each school in the district attended the meetings. Teachers either volunteered to participate or were selected by building principals or district administrators.

A total of 40 teachers participated in groups of 8 to 12. Thirty-six participants were women and four were men. Teachers represented all grade levels, K-12. Nearly all teachers were directly involved in implementing some aspect of KERA.

Discussion of Major Findings

The focus groups gave us our first real opportunity to sit down with groups of teachers and hear their reviews of KERA. Clearly, most teachers are both enthusiastic of and fearful about KERA implementation. A great majority of teachers interviewed during the fall of 1990 (Coe, Kannapel, and Lutz, 1991) were more positive than negative in their assessment of the reform act. Teachers appear to have retained their enthusiasm, but their enthusiasms *and* their criticisms are now more sharply defined.

Teacher excitement about changes

Teachers in all groups expressed enthusiasm over (1) the new instructional approaches mandated by KERA and (2) an increased sense of professionalism, resulting from learning new approaches, from communicating more frequently with their colleagues, and from increased freedom in the classroom. An Orange County primary teacher made this statement:

> I'm much more excited about my teaching this year than I've ever been. We've done a lot of whole language...with our kindergarten students, and it's been exciting to watch the children, to enjoy what's going on, and to know that that's going to carry on next year.

Teachers in all districts except Newtown Independent mentioned increased communication among teachers as a positive outcome of KERA. A Vanderbilt County teacher said:

> My biggest help has been that we teachers have been getting bits and pieces here and there and sharing them among ourselves. That has been the most tremendous help to me, things that [an SBDM council member] passes on, and [the art teacher] with technology. And even at the portfolio cluster scoring meeting, it was the other teachers that were helping me.

An Orange County teacher talked about the increased trust that is necessary to implement team teaching in the primary program:

> I think teachers are learning to depend on teachers.... Before, if somebody told me ... "Well, I'll go over this percentage," or "I'll go over math," or ... "I'll do the volume if you'll do the mass," ... I would have *never* walked off and trusted another teacher to do that for me. I would have gone, "Okay, sure, thank you so much," and then I would have walked in and shut the door and taught [my students] myself anyway. But now, no, I would trust any of them to teach it, and I hope they do me.

Vanderbilt County teachers commented that freedom in the classroom has been a positive outcome of KERA. A junior high teacher remarked:

> I think one of the good changes inside the classroom is the opportunity to try new things and not get shot down if it doesn't work the first time, because it's all new, and we're all in the same boat.

Increased teacher workload

Teachers in all districts agreed that the major drawback of KERA is that it demands too much change too quickly. Teachers spend long hours after school and on weekends obtaining additional training, planning for the primary program, participating in SBDM meetings, or compiling and scoring portfolios.

Teachers in some districts were grateful for substitute teachers who enabled them to attend daytime workshops or to score portfolios, but they were dismayed at the amount of time spent away from their classrooms. A Newtown elementary teacher said:

> You've got to jump in there sometime or other, but what about all these children that are caught in the transition? I'm scared for them, and it bothers me to think that I have failed my kids this year, and I know I have.... The children you're teaching this year have been

> neglected while you're trying to learn what to do next year.... You can't learn it all. Too much, too soon, too fast.

A Vanderbilt County teacher involved with both SBDM and portfolios commented, "I have no life since KERA. On a regular basis I have a meeting every night."

An Orange County teacher remarked:

> It's push, push, push, push. I don't see a spring. I don't see any time this summer for me to establish bonds with my own children at home.... That family relationship has to be there.

Reactions to assessment

KERA mandated the administration of an interim assessment to students in grades 4, 8, and 12 during the 1991-92 school year. Test results—along with attendance rates, dropout rates, retention rates, and successful transition to adult life after high school—will be used to establish a baseline for determining school success during the 1993-94 school year. The interim assessment included three components:

(1) a written "transition" test involving multiple-choice and open-ended questions in the areas of reading, writing, math, science and social studies;

(2) student writing portfolios containing six or seven writing samples from both language arts classes and other content areas; and

(3) performance tasks in which students were asked to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in the areas of math, science, and social studies, by performing real-life tasks.

All students in grades 4, 8, and 12 were given the transitional test and compiled writing portfolios, and all students in grade 4 participated in the performance test. Students in grades 8 and 12 were randomly selected for the performance test if the school contained more than 100 students at those grade levels. Data from all tests will be used to determine each school's baseline score.

Teachers in all four districts were upset about the inconsistent training and information they received on portfolio assessment. Before sharing teacher comments on this, a brief discussion is warranted about how portfolio training was delivered.

The state department of education, working jointly with the testing agency awarded the contract to design the assessment program, conducted the training. Eight regional coordinators at each grade level (4, 8, and 12) were trained in how to develop and score writing portfolios. Each regional coordinator (24 altogether from the three grade levels) trained 20 "cluster leaders," or leaders for one or two local districts. Cluster leaders then trained 20 "scoring teachers" (usually at least one teacher from each accountable grade level at each school). Three mandatory training meetings were conducted for scoring teachers during the 1991-92 school year, although optional training and scoring sessions were offered for teachers who wanted them; some districts granted release time for teachers to score portfolios.

The scoring teachers in our focus groups voiced universal dissatisfaction with the inconsistent and inadequate information given on portfolio assessment. A Lamont County junior high teacher remarked:

> The drawback [of portfolio assessment] is not being able to know exactly what we were to do and how we were to do it. I have gotten letters upon letters, and one letter will tell you to do one thing, and you'll get another letter and it'll say, no, you do it this way. That's been very frustrating.

State department officials acknowledge the problems with portfolio training and are working to correct them. For the 1992-93 school year, the state is divided into nine regions instead of eight, increasing the number of coordinators. Every school has a cluster leader who will train all scoring teachers in the building, and cluster leaders are trained directly by state department and testing agency staff. In addition, each district has appointed an assessment coordinator to channel information between the district and the state department. Math portfolios will be compiled in 1992-93, and the process is designed to go more smoothly than the writing portfolios this past year. Students will assemble portfolios in grades 9 through 11, may substitute samples as they improve, and will present the completed portfolios in grade 12. Teachers will be trained early in the year, and they will score from June until October rather than at the end of the school year.

Newtown teachers expressed the greatest dissatisfaction with the assessment program. One teacher said that her students were "insulted" by the performance assessment, because it was not a true test of their intelligence. A high school English teacher characterized the writing portfolio as "too rigid, too subjective, [and] too huge and cumbersome."

A Lamont County elementary teacher expressed concern that her school did not have the materials needed to administer the performance assessment and had to borrow from the high school and schools in neighboring districts. This meant students were being tested using

unfamiliar materials and equipment.

Teachers in nearly all districts expressed the view that KERA overemphasizes testing and that instruction should take priority over assessment. Many teachers said that students in grades 4, 8, and 12 were tested too much this year. The federal Chapter I program required the administration of a norm-referenced test during 1991-92, and many Kentucky districts (including the four in this study) administered the nationally normed Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) to all students this year. (State department staff point out that the time spent on portfolio and performance assessment is not necessarily time away from instruction, since students are actively engaged in instruction and learning in both processes.)

Teachers in both Lamont County and Orange County said they disliked mixing the CTBS with the new assessment program. They felt the CTBS is not compatible with the new instructional strategies and testing techniques required by KERA. Orange County teachers, however, pointed out that, at least at the high school level, students need the experience of taking nationally normed, standardized tests to prepare them to do well on college entrance exams.

Teachers in both Newtown and Orange County disliked a random sample of students being administered the performance test. They felt that how their schools were judged would depend on which students were chosen for testing. Orange County teachers were concerned that, over time, students are being compared not with their own performances but with those of a different cohort of students. In determining school rewards and sanctions, this year's eighth-grade scores will be compared with the eighth-grade scores two years from now. Teachers worried about this year's academically strong group of student academically being compared to a group that is not as strong.

A state department official in the assessment division agreed that different cohorts of students will be compared. He noted, however, that tests scores from 1992-93 and 1993-94 will be combined to determine a comparison score against which to judge the 1991-92 baseline score. This comparison score will then be used as the *new* baseline against which to judge combined test scores from the 1994-95 and 1995-96 school years. He said the system ensures that all students will go through the testing cycle at some point and that all students' test scores will be taken into account in determining school success.

Reactions to the assessment program haven't all been negative. Teachers involved in portfolio assessment, while expressing many reservations, hailed its benefits as well. A Lamont County junior high teacher valued its increased writing opportunities for students:

> I find that my children are writing much better, because—even though we kept a journal and we wrote at least once a week—I found that, this year, we wrote three, and four, and five times a week—always in the journal for about 10 minutes, but then something long with peer editing and that type of thing with the process writing. That has been very beneficial for the students—even my very low students. I could see a change in their writing habits and techniques.

Teachers in Lamont County and Orange County were fairly pleased with the performance task aspect of the new assessment program, and some mentioned that their students really enjoyed the test. An Orange County teacher said he thought the performance assessment was a considerable improvement over traditional standardized testing.

Views about professional development

Teachers in Vanderbilt County and Newtown Independent see increased opportunities for professional development as a benefit of KERA. Teachers in all districts agreed that professional development opportunities available since KERA have, for the most part, been of high quality. A Newtown teacher commented:

> I think it was the first time that I was able to get professional development as a teacher. It was the very first time I've ever been able to go to a workshop or seminar or have any advanced training, and every professional person that I know of has had that opportunity. I'm really thankful..., and I just need more.

Orange County teachers praised district administrators for sending teachers to be trained as trainers, so that a variety of professional development opportunities were brought back to the district.

Primary teachers preparing to implement the nongraded primary program generally agree that visiting schools with nongraded programs in place has been their most helpful professional development activity. Orange County has approached primary training differently. The district brought in an outside consultant who worked for almost a year with administrators and primary committees.

Primary program viewed positively

The vast majority of primary teachers agree with the concept that children should move at their own pace and that learning should be more interactive and integrated.

However, most express a great deal of anxiety about the changes required by the nongraded primary program and the accelerated implementation timeline. Teachers with the most positive outlook about the program are those who have received the most training.

Primary teachers also spoke highly of new instructional strategies that will be used with the nongraded program, such as hands-on and cooperative group activities. Primary teachers in all districts said they have already begun to change their instructional approaches and that students enjoy and are learning from the more interactive, cooperative tasks.

Primary teachers disagree with the timelines set for the program's implementation. Even though KERA actually specified that the program should be in place by the 1992-93 school year, the state department of education encouraged schools to phase the program in over a period of several years. The 1992 General Assembly sought to clarify the implementation deadline by amending KERA to require full implementation of the program by the 1993-94 school year. Even though this represents a *delay* in the implementation schedule originally set forth in the law, the fact that schools had been told they could implement the program over a period of years resulted in teachers interpreting the new implementation schedule as an acceleration of the timetable.

A Newtown primary teacher who is enthused about the program and who has attended numerous training sessions described the difficulty with rapid implementation of the program:

> The biggest drawback is it's too much, too quick.... When I feel like I've gotten my head a little bit above water in math and I understand how they want me to teach it, I turn around and find that I've got to now learn...to teach reading using whole language and all that. Then they turn right around and I've got to meet the writing portfolio and try to do that.... I'm trying to learn how to do so many different things.... I find that I cannot remember what anything is unless I get that big, thick book out and go back through it again. Everything is just too overwhelming. How can you do all these things and meet the daily needs of your children? We can't.

School-based decisionmaking

Teachers at nearly all schools implementing SBDM spoke highly of the program. Teachers from one school said their SBDM council had been responsible for allocating instructional money, for planning the school's professional development, for organizing a PTO, and for making improvements to the buildings and grounds.

Teachers in Newtown voted against SBDM at both the elementary school and the high school. When the elementary school was required by the board to implement SBDM, however, it turned out to be an excellent experience. A high school teacher said this about teacher empowerment:

> Teachers know what it takes to teach students. The problem we've always had in education is administrators getting in our way.... When you tell a teacher, "You can make the decision, and you can make your classroom what you want to make it," then you've made the biggest step toward doing that.

Although most teachers who had participated in SBDM felt positive about the experience, concerns and problems were mentioned. Some teachers (in different districts) had experiences with principals opposed to SBDM. For example, principals made little effort to keep the faculty informed of council actions, or failed to or delayed implementing decisions made by the council.

Orange County teachers complained of difficulty in getting enough parental involvement in the school council. They said the parents do not really believe their voice will be heard. One teacher pointed out that it had taken teachers a while to believe that school administrators would listen to them, also.

Newtown teachers expressed a different concern about parent involvement. They had always enjoyed excellent parent and community support, but teachers felt some parents viewed SBDM as a vehicle for exerting undue control. One teacher explained:

> We have always been a school system that I thought handled community relations better than anybody, and then suddenly I saw the attack group coming into these sessions [to consider adopting SBDM] who were, in effect, going to take over their schools, and that was a scary thing to me....

Extended school services

Teachers in all districts mentioned the extended school services program as a positive outcome of KERA. But funding reductions necessitated by a state budget shortfall in 1991-92 concerned teachers in three districts. Most districts had to eliminate summer programs, and some plan to scale back their after-school program next year.

Family resource centers/youth services centers

Family resource centers and youth services centers were created by KERA to help students and families deal with problems outside

school that may interfere with student learning. Teachers in our focus groups generally viewed the centers as positive, even though Orange County is the only district in this study with centers in place.

Some teachers, however, expressed concern that schools are being required to take on too many responsibilities for students' lives.

Funding for education

Increased funding was mentioned as a positive outcome of KERA in Orange County and Vanderbilt County—the two districts that levied the highest local tax increases and saw the biggest increases in state funding. Teachers in Vanderbilt County identified the local school board and administration as facilitators of reform, making sure that the additional money was passed along to teachers.

On the other side, inadequate funding was identified as a major drawback of KERA in two districts: Lamont County and Newtown Independent. Lamont County has the lowest local tax rate of the four study districts and received the smallest increase in state funding of the four. Lamont County teachers have not been given many opportunities to attend training workshops during the school day, both because the district could not afford substitute teachers and because few substitutes are available. In addition, teachers felt that district staff were not as helpful as they could be, partially because the central office is understaffed.

The situation in Newtown Independent district is somewhat different. The district has the highest local tax rate of the four in the study. Also, of the four districts, it had the highest per pupil revenue (from state and local sources) before KERA and the second highest per pupil revenue after KERA. Even so, Newtown teachers identified inadequate funding as a problem primarily because, under KERA, surrounding county districts received larger funding increases than Newtown. Moreover, because Newtown is a small district (just over 900 students), a fairly large per-pupil income does not necessarily allow for the addition of many new programs. One Newtown teacher remarked:

> We think it's really unfair that when you have done a good job teaching your children, that you get punished by not getting any money.

In addition, many teachers reported spending significant amounts of their own money to have the resources needed to implement the new primary program this fall, even though school boards in all Kentucky districts were required to allocate a minimum of $75 per pupil to each school for instructional supplies. However, teachers from schools in three of the four study districts identified the instructional allotment as a real facilitator of reform at their schools. A primary teacher from Newtown remarked:

> What monies we have gotten, through our council and through the school system, it has been a positive thing, because it's the first time I ever received $500 to spend on manipulatives. It's the first time I ever had a chance to go back around and say, "What else do I need in the classroom?"

Effects of state department reorganization

Teachers in three districts mentioned reorganization of the state department of education as a barrier to implementation. They said department inability to answer questions hampered communication. One teacher complained about general disorganization in the department of education:

> They're not coordinated down there. The different departments are not coordinating each other's programs...so that we're getting a complete picture. We're getting it piecemeal, like a jigsaw puzzle, and we're supposed to put all those pieces together and come up with well-educated children.

An Orange County teacher commented:

> I think that, if we have to meet these expectations, they'd better set clear expectations.... It's like nobody knows exactly what we're supposed to be doing, but there's a law that says we have to do it.... If we have to do this, then spell it out and don't change your mind, don't go back and add something or take something away, just set it down in black and white and do it.... We're being assessed on all this.... I mean, we're losing or keeping our jobs according to something that we don't know about....

Role of the principal

One issue that came up repeatedly in our discussions was the strong role played by the school principal in implementing KERA. Not surprisingly, nearly all groups identified the school principal as either the major barrier to or the major facilitator of school reform.

The combined statements of two Vanderbilt County teachers describe how one principal has facilitated reform implementation:

> I think our principal has just opened our eyes.... She has asked the administration for money for things again and again and again. And she knows her stuff. I mean, that must be her pastime.... reading up on KERA and knowing what to do.... She makes sure that the fourth grade knows what the third grade is doing, so that the transition will take place and run smoothly, and

> the fifth grade knows and the sixth grade knows. Fourth, fifth, and sixth grade teachers are represented on our primary committee. Parents are too—were last year and the upcoming year—on the [SBDM] committees that are in place.

Teachers in three schools in two different districts alluded to poor leadership from the principal as being a barrier to KERA implementation. Teachers from one school noted that their principal has not informed them of training opportunities or helped find ways for them to attend. Teachers at two schools described how their principals had obstructed the implementation of SBDM.

Handling of the school's instructional money is another way the principal has either facilitated or hindered reform. Some teachers were included in the decisions about how to spend the money; teachers at other schools had no idea how much money had been received, how it was spent, or how to get access to it.

Suggestions for the Legislature

Slow implementation

When asked what advice they would offer the legislature, the first response in all groups was SLOW DOWN. Teachers were specifically concerned about the rapid timelines for implementing the primary and assessment programs. Teachers were keenly aware that the school rewards and sanctions program will begin in two years; they believe that judging them this soon in the implementation process is unfair. A Vanderbilt County teacher commented:

> I'm so nervous that they're just going to come in and say, "You're not doing this right." I'm thinking I've only had two years to do it, and one year has been full of training and new things. I feel like they need to give us a chance to try it and experiment for awhile.

Compensate teachers for increased workload

The teacher's second request is to compensate them for their increased workload by either allocating money for overtime pay or providing planning and training time during the school day or year.

A primary teacher in Newtown said:

> If they want it to be reform, then they're going to have to do ...three things.... Give us more time, compensate us, and train us, or it's going to be educational chaos.

A Vanderbilt County teacher offered this suggestion for the legislature:

> I think, if they expect us to implement this, they're going to have to pay for it. And now they've already started with cutbacks. And the parents are saying, "You got this big raise, why isn't Junior passing?"

Stick with KERA

Even though teachers had misgivings about certain aspects of KERA, the universal opinion in all groups was that the legislature needs to give it a chance to work. A Newtown teacher commented:

> One of my biggest fears is they're going to...dump it in your lap and say, "You're accountable." And if you don't come up with it, if you don't get the results they want, then, they're going to say, "This didn't work," and they're going to ditch it and go right back to the same old stuff we've been in before.

A Lamont County teacher said:

> I'm all for change and improvement, but why don't they let us stay with something long enough to see if it's going to work?

Fully fund KERA

Finally, teachers want to make sure that the legislature continues to fund KERA programs. Some districts have already received word that the state budget shortfall will mean no state funding increase for the current school year. One teacher said:

> A real concrete concern, I think, is the fact that our legislators, bless them..., passed something that could not be adequately funded.... It may happen sometime, but I think it's going to take a long time.

Conclusion

The teachers we met are largely supportive of the basic philosophy and programs of KERA. They are hopeful that the legislature will stick with the law long enough for it to work. They are frustrated, anxious, and fatigued, however, at trying to make massive changes in a relatively short period of time. While some of their anxiety is a natural part of the change process and will undoubtedly ease over time, it is clear that teachers need more time, assistance, and resources if they are to keep up the present level of implementation.

Anxiety as a natural component of change

The problems and discontent voiced by teachers in the focus groups may signal that reform in Kentucky is thriving. In a recent literature review, Fullan and Miles (1992) emphasize the importance of understanding that systemic change

requires new learning and initial frustrations:

> Even well-developed innovations represent new meaning and new learning for those who encounter them initially and require time to assimilate them. So many studies have documented this early period of difficulty that we have given it a label—"the implementation dip." Even in cases where reform eventually succeeds, things will often go wrong before they go right. Michael Huberman and Matthew Miles found that the absence of early difficulty in a reform effort was usually a sign that not much was being attempted; superficial or trivial change was being substituted for substantial change (p. 749).

Helping teachers implement KERA

Teacher complaints of fatigue from trying to implement KERA should not be dismissed as teachers' dragging their feet on implementation. Many teachers in our focus groups were school leaders who are wholeheartedly attempting to implement the reform act. Fullan and Miles point out:

> Too often, change-related problems are ignored, denied, or treated as an occasion for blame and defense. Success in school reform efforts is much more likely when problems are treated as natural, expected phenomena.... Problems must be taken seriously, not attributed to "resistance," or to the ignorance and wrongheadedness of others.... The enemies of good coping are passivity, denial, avoidance, conventionality, and fear of being "too radical." Good coping is active, assertive, inventive. It goes to the root of the problem when that is needed (p. 750).

The teachers in our focus groups voiced many problems, but they did not evince a great deal of passivity, denial, avoidance, or conventionality, and they never showed any fear of being considered too radical. They are fatigued, but they appear to be fully engaged in the implementation of KERA.

It is clear, however, that teachers need more time to plan and implement change, and that teachers in some districts need more resources. In addition, stronger management of change may be needed at the state level, and strong leadership at the building level is critical. The legislature has addressed the need for teachers to have more training time during the school year by giving districts the option of offering five additional training days beyond the four currently mandated, and most districts in this study hope to take advantage of this opportunity. A mandate for more planning time during the school day would serve to further ease the tremendous workload teachers are now experiencing as they try to implement the most radical education reform effort in the state's history.

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This publication was produced in whole or in part with funds from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U. S. Department of Education, under contract number RP91002002. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U. S. government.

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